

**Rural Migrants and their Social Networks in an Urban Setting:  
The Case of Joe Slovo Park, Cape Town**

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**Date: December 2003**

**Declaration**

I, Robert Mongwe the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own. It has not been previously submitted either in its entirety or partially at another university for degree purposes.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to a select group of people who supported me emotionally and materially from my undergraduate years through to postgraduate level. My mother, Magdaline, brother Msindo, sisters Lindiwe and Khegwana, my uncles Mike and Jeff, my aunts, Selinah, Sarah, Emily, Tandane, Thandi and all my cousins.

I also salute my mother's cousin David. Those journeys to school, to the soccer field and our wanderings throughout the land helped me become the astute, disciplined person I am today. Amongst all my kin, David was the one person who understood more than any other my desire to acquire an education. Today David is the one who will feel vindicated, to stand at the height of the mountain shouting, "I told you".

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate the nature and purpose of migrant social in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, and Joe Slovo Park. The study found that migrant social networks served both economic and cultural functions. Through their social networks migrants seek to maximise their remittances to their areas as well as to convey information about the availability of jobs and housing conditions in the city. Newly arrived migrants depend on their kin and village mates for food, shelter, and sense of belonging in an environment that can otherwise be hostile. Similarly in times of crisis such as redundancy, property losses migrants can call on the support within their immediate area of residence or from other members based in their rural areas of origin. Furthermore, migrants visit their rural areas of origin to partake in marriages, initiation ceremonies, and funeral service. And many of the migrants who die in the city are transported to the rural areas for burial. Migrant social networks demonstrate the complex interconnectedness of the urban and rural spheres of life in both the economic and cultural aspects of life.

## **Opsomming**

Hierdie studie het die aard en doel van sosiale netwerke onder migrante werkers in die Marconi Beam informele nedersetting en Joe Slovo Park ondersoek. Daar is gevind dat hierdie netwerke ekonomiese en kulturele funksies vervul. Op ekonomiese vlak fasiliteer die netwerke die twee-rigting vloei van goedere en dienste tussen stedelike huishoudings en die landelike tuiste. D.m.v. netwerke onder migrante werkers word inligting oor die beskikbaarheid van werk, behuising en dies meer versprei. Gebasseer op die ideologiese aanname dat die landelike tuiste meer belangrik is as die stedelike huishouding, word materiële goedere en geld, wat in die stad verdien word, na die landelike tuiste oorgeplaas. Daarmee saam word stedelike uitgawes tot 'n minimum beperk. In die geval van gebeurlikhede kenmerkend van die stedelike situasie, soos verlies van werk of eiendom, wend migrante werkers hulle na die landelike tuiste vir hulp en ondersteuning. Op 'n kulturele vlak besoek migrante die landelike areas om deel te neem aan begrafnisse, troues en inisiasie seremonies. Baie van diegene wat tot sterwe kom in die stad, word na die landelike areas oorgeplaas vir hul begrafnis. Hierdie besoeke dien as bewys van die migrant se lojaliteit teenoor die landelike tuiste en gemeenskap. In die geheel gesien bevestig die sosiale netwerke onder migrante werkers die inter-afhanklikheid van die stedelike en landelike lewenssfeer.



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introductory Comments**

#### **1. Background**

The aim of this study is to investigate the types of social networks that operated in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement and Joe Slovo Park, and the nature and proportion of goods that flowed through such social networks. I will return to the aim of this study later in the following chapters. In the next section I would like give a background to the political situation of the 1990s and how within that political context land invasions emerged subsequently leading to the establishment of informal settlements.

The 1980s and the 1990s were a period characterised by political changes in South Africa. Amongst others these changes occurred in the area of human settlements, in which the South African government introduced a variety of policy changes, including abolishing discriminatory legislation such as the Black Urban Areas Act in 1986, and the Group Areas Act in 1990 (Swilling 1991).

These changes in legislation meant that African persons were free to enter the cities on permanent or temporary basis according to their own desires without fear of arrest or harassment by law enforcement agencies. This new found legal and political freedom coupled with the decline of rural economies encouraged an intensification of rural to urban migration (Western, 1996). Given the shortage of housing for low income groups on the one hand, and the high cost of housing in middle and upper



middle class suburbs in the urban areas most of the rural migrants found their way to the African townships and the informal settlements where they sought shelter with kin (Cross & Bekker, 1999; Sharp, et al, 2000).

Shortage of housing stock, the increase in rural to urban migration, the natural growth of the African population in the formal townships, compelled those who were inadequately housed to seek alternative housing in informal settlements. Most of the informal settlements were built without the permission of municipal authorities. In the late 1980s the state attempted to curb the proliferation of land invasions and the establishment of housing on such lands through legislative measures. Consequently, a law called the Prevention of Squatting Amendment Act of 1988 was passed by parliament and it came into effect in 1989.

Despite the passing of legislation land invasions continued, and it was almost impossible for the state to effect evictions. Firstly, although the law was meant to prevent land invasions, some sections of the act stipulated amongst other things that before squatters could be evicted the land owners were required by law to prove to the courts that there was alternative land available for resettling those who were being evicted (Royston cited in Azuela, et al: 1998:147).

Secondly, given the political environment of the 1990s, a period in which the apartheid state suffered its worst legitimacy crisis, it became difficult for the state to resort to heavy handed tactics such as forcible removal of people who were settling in undesignated spaces. The attitude of the courts, and the political environment collectively encouraged the homeless in the cities to continue illegally occupying land

in the cities so that by 1990 it was estimated that about 800 000 people in South Africa lived in informal settlements (Swilling, et al: 1991).

Although there are not sufficient studies to demonstrate how the various South African cities were affected by land invasions, there exist studies conducted in some of the major cities. According to one study conducted at the time, a third of the population of the Durban functional Area lived in informal housing on illegally occupied land (Hindson & McCarthy, 1994). Another study conducted also in the Durban area suggests that most of the informal settlements were built near African and Indian middle class communities (Singh, 1997). Cape Town just like any other major metropolitan centre experienced its share of rural to urban migration and the proliferation of informal housing in the beginning of the 1990s (Abbot and Douglas, 1998).

It was clear by the late 1980s that one of the challenges that was to face the new government in the post apartheid period was the provision of adequate housing to the poor. The mushrooming of informal settlements in many parts of South African cities triggered researchers and academics to investigate life conditions in these settlements. One key finding about informal settlements was the importance of informal institutions in everyday life. Land ownership, relations between property owners and tenants, social control agencies and so forth functioned informally (De Sagne, 1997; Van Horen, 1999).

From the outset scholars and researchers suggested that if policy changes were to have a positive impact, it was imperative for policy makers to take note of the existing



systems of informal support. They went as far as suggesting if the process of upgrading of informal settlements was not handled with the required sensitivity, intervention ran the risk of worsening rather than improving living conditions of informal settlement residents (Napier, 1998, De Sagte, 1997, Yose, 1999).

Whilst the above studies focused on the challenges of integrating informal settlements into the formal urban structures there were studies that concentrated on the nature and quality of life in informal settlements in South Africa. Singh (1997) wrote about perceptions of middle class residents regarding the development of an informal settlement near their own neighbourhood. Vawda (cited in Singh, 1997) reported on the distribution and use of income within households in informal settlements in the city of Durban. Spiegel (1996, 1999) on the other hand wrote about the composition of households amongst the poor in the city of Cape Town including residents of informal settlements. McDonald (1998) wrote about the ambiguity of housing policy regarding the provision of housing to poor African immigrants.

The current study contributes to a growing volume of research, concentrating on the question of the growth of informal housing, and the attempts at policy level to address this issue. The name of the informal settlement is Marconi Beam, situated in Northern Cape Town. The invasion of the Marconi Beam land took place in 1990. The following paragraph provides a short historical view of this land invasion case.

In 1990 a group of men employed at the Milnerton horse race course invaded a piece of land near their place of work. Following the land invasion an informal settlement



was constructed on the Montague Gardens Industrial Township. This informal settlement was built on a prime industrial site belonging to Cavca a property development company. Given the economic value of the area, this land invasion attracted attention from many parties, including the local municipality, local business, ratepayers, and non-government organisations. Although both the municipality and the owner of the land regarded the occupation as illegal, the political climate of the 1990s made it impossible for the authorities to remove the residents of the informal settlement forcefully from the site.

Owing to the political sensitivity of this land invasion, the affected parties opted to solve this land invasion question through negotiations. Furthermore, in order to lend political legitimacy to the solution, a range of interested parties, including planners, engineers, environmentalists, rate-payers associations, political parties, local industrialists, and other community based organisations, and the representatives of the residents of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were invited to participate in the negotiations.

After lengthy negotiations culminating in the presentation of development plans, a decision was reached. It was decided that the area within the Koeberg Road Economic Corridor be developed into an area of mixed urban form made up of a residential zone, consisting of low and middle-income housing, and a zone for industrial activity (Development plan for Marconi Beam, June 1994: 12, 16).

The Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was to be demolished, and its residents were to be relocated in Joe Slovo Park, a low cost housing development to be established

within the Koeberg Road Economic Spine. It was also agreed that a low-middle income housing development also be established near Joe Slovo Park. This was done in order to offset the negative impact of low cost housing on middle class residential property in Milnerton (Marconi Beam Planners Report, 1994:24).

The aim of this agreement was to reach a compromise between the different stakeholders who were involved in the negotiations process. As of 1997, building began in Joe Slovo Park, and in terms of the agreement reached at the negotiations, the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were meant to demolish their informal dwellings before taking over their formal houses in Joe Slovo Park. No informal housing was to be allowed in Joe Slovo Park, and any home owner willing to extend their dwellings was expected to follow established formal process.

The Marconi Beam Housing Project was presented as a joint venture between the state, the private sector, and the people. It was hoped by the authorities that this housing project would serve as a blue print development for other municipalities that had to deal with land invasions.

### **Scope**

This is a case study focussing on Joe Slovo Park, a low-income housing development that was started in the early 1990s. This housing development was officially regarded as completed in 1999 after 1500 housing units were built. This low-income housing development is situated in Montague Gardens Industrial Township, and it is part of the Blaauwberg Municipality.



## **Problem Statement**

A number of studies have been conducted investigating social networks, geographic mobility, and housing redevelopment initiatives. Wilmott & Young (1957) have suggested in their study conducted in a working class neighbourhood of London that housing redevelopment initiatives aimed at improving residents' living conditions often undermine local social networks constructed to facilitate the mutual exchange of goods and services by kin and neighbours. Another study conducted in Cape Town on the impact of forced removals on people's social networks concluded that the forced removal of people from District Six dismantled kin networks and scattered members of the Coloured population across the Cape Peninsula (Pinnock, 1984).

More recently a study was conducted to investigate the consequences of informal settlements upgrading on residents' lives. The study concluded that although the upgrading of informal settlements into formal neighbourhoods improved living conditions by bringing municipal services, planned neighbourhoods do not allow the type of flexibility that is common in informal settlements (Yose, 1999).

One way of explaining why projects that are intended to benefit ordinary people end up harming them is that housing redevelopment initiatives are carried out in a bureaucratic manner, often not taking cognisance of local cultural enclaves within which different sections of the population may be encapsulated (Mayer, 1971). The aim of this study is to investigate the types of social networks that operated in Marconi Beam Informal and Joe Slovo Park, and the nature and proportion of goods that flowed through such networks.



### **Research Questions**

1. What type of social networks operated in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, and which goods and services were exchanged through these social networks, and why?
2. What sort of social networks emerged after the relocation of residents in Joe Slovo Park, and which goods and services were exchanged through such networks, and why?

### **Objectives**

1. To demonstrate how the residents of Joe Slovo Park used their social relationships as sources of material support.
2. To discuss the political, social and economic contexts within which such social networks emerged.
3. To demonstrate how the relocation of people in Joe Slovo Park influenced their social and economic relationship with others (friends, kin, neighbours).

### **Significance of the Study**

1. This study will enlighten municipal officials about the challenges associated with planning and developing informal settlements. This study also adds to a growing number of other studies focusing on different dimensions of life in informal settlements in South African cities.

2. This study takes a close look at one community, and shows how its members use their social relationships as a basis to mobilise material support.
3. Very often ordinary people are seen as “victims” of social structures. This study demonstrates the extent to which ordinary people were not simply passive recipients of social changes, but that they interpreted the changes for themselves and in fact used the political situation of the 1990s to their own benefit.

The following section focus attention on the methodology that was employed in order to complete this study.

### **1.7. Research Methodology**

The case study approach was selected in order to complete the study. This section will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the case study approach. Firstly, a case study can enable the researcher to examine the ebb and flow of social life over time and display patterns of every day life as they change (Orum, et al: 1991). Secondly, the case study approach allows one to use multiple sources of evidence, thereby leading the investigator to develop a process triangulation (Yin, 1984:91). Thirdly, the virtue of a case study research like other qualitative research is that it lends itself to theoretical generation and generalisation (Orum et al, 1991; Yin, 1984).

Critics raise two issues that are pertinent to the case study approach. Firstly, to what extent can the findings of a case study be generalisable to another case that was not



being studied? In other words the question is one of external validity. In response one must point out that case studies seek to generalise to theory rather than to other cases. Furthermore, one does not simply seek to test theories but to interpret social phenomena in new and innovative ways.

Secondly, critics of the case study approach point further that with the explosion of urban populations and increasing social complexity, it is difficult to implement case studies. This criticism is advanced by scholars who associate the study method with the study of bounded entities such as small groups of people, an organisation and so forth. Yet one may argue that case studies assist researchers in understanding how the complex parts of a social whole connect into one another. In the next section the discussion focus on the data collection methods.

#### **1.7.1. Data Collection Methods**

In order to collect data the following methods were used: interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis, as well as carrying out a household survey. In the next section I discuss in some detail the experiences I encountered in the field with regard to each of the methods used in gathering data.

##### **1.7.1.1. Interviews**

I conducted interviews with the residents. As far as interviews where concerned, interviewees were approached with a set of thoroughly thought through questions. An attempt was made to ask the questions in the same sequence to all the respondents. The structured interviews worked well with community leaders, persons who were adequately informed about social affairs or persons who had a



high self-esteem. However, there were some challenges. Firstly, for persons who were not informed before hand about the interviews were less prepared and thus reluctant to answer questions on which they had insufficient information. Secondly, formal interviews intimidated interviewees, consequently restraining the flow of information. Thirdly, the asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee created in the context of formal interviews is also a barrier to the free flow of information.

The dress code of a researcher is important, for example the fact that I wore spectacles, with a notebook in hand created the impression that I was a very important government official. Attempts to convince the interviewees otherwise failed. For that reason interviewees tried to give me what they considered to be the 'right' answers. Whenever interviewees failed to present what they considered as the right answers, they felt very humiliated. Such interviewees told others in the community that the questions I asked were difficult.

Considering the disadvantages of conducting formal interviews, I departed from this method, and started talking to the residents informally. Such discussions were long, and open ended, and casual. Questions were formulated in such a way that the respondents could say anything they knew about Joe Slovo Park or Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

This strategy yielded the desired results. People told me about their personal experiences of living in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement or Joe Slovo Park. Respondents told me about their experiences of the pass laws, how they used to

avoid arrests, their experiences of growing up in the rural areas as compared to being in town. These experiences were narrated in great detail. The narratives were detailed and descriptive<sup>1</sup>, often presented from the point of view of the interviewees.

In addition to taking notes, there were times when I requested permission to capture the interviews on a tape recorder. Interviewees responded in assorted ways to this request. Firstly some interviewees asked for my political affiliation. Others thought that I was an inspector who was trying to detect people who did not pay their television licences. I had to do a little bit of explaining to these respondents before they could agree to tape recorded interviews. Particularly for people who had criminal records or with a history of political activism, the tape recorder was associated with the state and its extensive network of government agencies of social control.

Yet not all interviewers were intimidated by the tape recorder. There were respondents who were excited by the fact that their voices were going to be captured on tape. This category of respondents tended to divulge information they considered proper to be captured on tape, and consciously excluded what they considered as "rubbish". In order to deal with this situation I tried to make the interviews as informal as possible asking less sensitive questions first, then following with questions that I considered sensitive.

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz was amongst the first scholars to investigate the importance of the method of thick description in anthropology. Whilst recognising the importance of the method of thick description in ethnographic writing, he also encouraged discussion about the theoretical, philosophical issues. These issues are discussed in detail in a book called "The Interpretation of Cultures", published in 1973.



For some respondents the tape recorder became a therapeutic device. Respondents sat back, took deep breaths, and after some time started talking very relaxed. They poured their emotion on to the tape, talking as if they were not talking to me but directly to this machine. They spoke at length and I did not make any effort to interrupt them.

At the end of each recorded session the respondents would look at me with some excitement, and often they asked for a replay of the cassette. When they paused, I would go on to ask the next question and I would follow this procedure repeatedly until both of us were exhausted. The tape recorder proved popular with respondents for some of them asked me to visit their homes whenever I was in the vicinity. In this manner, I was able to know interviewees as people not merely as respondents to interview questions.

Some interviewees were, however, of the impression that they alone had the right to provide me with information. In such cases the challenge was how to manage those expectations without damaging one's personal reputation in the field. Image management in the field is important because it is through one's image that one is able to access data. Although informal interviews came to be an important method of collecting data, they were by no means the only method. Where I considered it appropriate I collected personal histories<sup>2</sup> from persons who had moved back and forth between town and country for twenty or more years.

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<sup>2</sup> In life histories writers collect detailed information regarding an individual's life. The purpose of life histories is to illustrate how macro political and economic processes impact on the individual, and how the individual in turn, responds to these structural forces. Information about an individual's life is collected through interviews. The interviews are often supplemented by personal documents such as letters, diaries, photographs, and other private papers concerning the individual under investigation.

#### **1.7.1.2. Participant Observation**

In addition, I conducted participant observation. I kept my eyes open, without asking questions, did a lot of listening and wandering from one end of the field site to the other. I wandered in the township, met and spoke to many people. Most of the participant observation took place during this time. Although in the beginning of participant observation period people were quite conscious of my presence amongst them, later on I presence became unnoticeable. Many residents who did not know me simply thought I was one of the residents.

I visited several shebeens in Joe Slovo Park. Again, in the shebeens, I met people of all ages, and genders, some were from Joe Slovo, some from other parts of Cape Town. I saw migrants arriving fresh from the countryside. Most of the migrants I met told me they were in Cape Town to visit their kin. With time I came to understand that people from the countryside do not just visit, but come in order to scout for greener pastures. At that time, many residents were constructing new informal dwellings next to their formal houses.

I saw people wake up to clean their yards, run their Spaza shops, look after children or go to find work in the area of the Koeberg Road Development Corridor. The Koeberg Road Corridor is a mixed land use zone constituting of a horse racing course, low and middle class housing, a library, schools, clinics, a light industry zone, fast food establishments, garages, filling stations, pawn shops and so on. Driving or

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Not all the information collected through this method is utilised, but that which the researcher deems to be relevant to the topic being discussed. The life history method is therefore selective in nature. Life histories work well if they complement other research methods. The use of life histories in anthropology is not yet a subject of widespread discussion. It is for this reason that comment on this method is located at the foot of the page.



on foot one can see the many people who go about their daily activities along the Koeberg Road Corridor.

The method of participant observation has a number of advantages. Firstly, with participant observation I was able to complement what the subjects, professionals, and the media said about the Marconi Beam Housing Project. Secondly, participant observation allows the researcher to observe everyday interactions, rather than relying on specific inquiries into certain behaviours (Dewalt et al cited in Russell, 1998:260).

Different scholars prefer using participant observation as a research method for different reasons. Chambers (1989, 1997) emphasises that the strength of any participatory approach lies in the fact that it gives the researcher an opportunity to observe the everyday life of subjects, and that in development contexts this method enables researchers to identify and understand the realities of the poor for whom development is meant to benefit. Scholars in other disciplines also use the method of participant observation. Thrasher (1927) documented the experiences of homeless people in Chicago; whilst Whyte (1943; 1995) studied an American Italian community.

Participant observation has come to be useful in the study of marginal groups. These marginal groups include racial minorities, homeless people, drug addicts, and the poor. In all these cases participant observation offered the groups being studied an opportunity to be visible and heard. Participant observation allows the observer to understand social reality from the point of view of the people being studied. Critics of

participant observation point out however that if the researcher is too close to the people he is studying, then the objectivity of the research can come under question. In other words, researchers can get so enmeshed in local life that their view of the world simply becomes that of the people or group they have studied.

#### **1.7.1.3. Documentary Analysis**

In addition to these field methods I collected over one hundred newspaper clippings drawing extensively from “Die Burger”, “The Cape Times”, “The Argus” and Milnerton’s community newspaper, Table Talk. These newspaper clippings carried material that was relevant to my research starting from 1990 to 1997. I analysed all of them and selected newspaper reports that I considered most appropriate for the work at hand. I also analysed minutes of meetings, pamphlets, development plans, and posters advertising the Marconi Beam Housing Project.

#### **1.7.1.4. The Household Survey**

Towards the end of the year, 2000, I conducted a household survey in fifty formal homes in Joe Slovo Park. The sample was randomly selected from the formal housing units. The sampled homes were divided into north and south, with the street serving as a physical marker. According to the distribution of housing units 37 homes of the sample were selected from the northern part of the settlement, whilst the remaining 23 of the households were selected from the southern side. In cases where there was more than one dwelling per site the survey questionnaire was administered to the respective heads of households. The survey addressed the following aspects issues:



- (i) The growth patterns of households,
- (ii) Nature and average size of households over time.
- (iii) Time at which respondents arrived in Cape Town, and their villages of origin in the rural areas.
- (iv) Areas of settlement in Cape Town before arriving in Joe Slovo Park.
- (v) Determine the nature of levels of employment.
- (vi) Consumption patterns of individual households.

Firstly, I realised how difficult it was for respondents employed in the informal sector to determine their earnings. This was due to the fluctuations in income. Secondly, even for workers employed in the formal sector I did not ask respondents to produce any documented proof of the amounts they claimed as earnings per any time period. I trusted that the figures they gave me were approximate enough to enable one to gauge their social and economic position. Thirdly, in cases where both husbands and wives were present at the time of the interview, wives tended to refer questions about incomes to their husbands. Fourthly, I interviewed housewives who claimed they did not know their husbands' earnings. Such women said that so long as their husbands were supporting their households they were content. According to these women, the man was the head of the household and could not be questioned by women on matters relating to the running of the family. This was so in terms of "Xhosa culture".

#### **1.7.1.5. Outline of the Study**

**Chapter one** is divided into two parts. The first part briefly outlines the background to the study, states the research question, its purpose, and the significance of the

study for both policy and academia. The second part of the chapter discusses the methodology employed in implementing the study.

**Chapter two** is a literature review discussing the significance of social networks in different situations. In this regard the literature review will focus on both theoretical issues as well as on the empirical studies that were undertaken.

**Chapter three** consists of an in-depth discussion of the historical and political context within which the Marconi Beam Land Invasion occurred. This chapter also introduces the different stakeholders who were affected by this land invasion question, and the political views each of these stakeholders held, and the consensus on this issue.

**Chapter four** discusses the role of social networks as an adjustment strategy for migrants both in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement and Joe Slovo Park. By using biography I show how the uncertainties of life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement made it necessary for migrants to keep social ties with their rural areas of origin, whilst cultivating new ties in the urban area in which they lived.

**Chapter five** focuses on the structure of households, their residential arrangements and inter-household cooperation in Joe Slovo Park. I show that the structure of households in Joe Slovo Park support the argument that households of the poor are complex, and differ culturally from those of the middle classes. I suggest further that in addition to providing shelter, a house is a resource through which the poor



originating in the rural areas facilitate the movement of their kin and home mates into urban areas.

**Chapter six** pays attention to the role of social networks in the labour market. This is discussed against the background of available jobs in the municipal economy, and the level of formal schooling and training amongst residents.

**Chapter seven** is the summary and conclusion. A theme that runs through the major chapters of this study concerns the role of social networks in the lives of the people studied. To that end I summarise briefly the development of Marconi Beam, the founding of Joe Slovo Park to the present. In this regard I discuss the importance of social networks in the exchange of goods and services in both settlements. Furthermore, I also show that social networks were also operative in the economic sphere.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2. Introduction**

Social network analysis first appeared in the 1950s with most of the studies being conducted in urban situations. This approach was particularly useful in analysing relationships between individuals, groups, and how they relate to the macro economic and political structures in their societies. Before going any further it is important to define the concept of network.

Bott (1971, 320) defined a network as all or some of the social units (individuals and groups) with whom a particular individual or group is in contact. Networks exist to serve functions such as: sharing of information, engage in reciprocal exchanges of goods and services, and offering emotional support (Walsh & Simonelli, 1986; Lomnitz, 1977; Stacy, 1974; Young & Willmott, 1957; Mayer, 1961; Pauw, 1963).

This chapter is divided into four parts. Firstly, I will focus on the different criteria by which social network analysts differentiate between types of networks. The second part of this chapter will focus on the functioning of social networks at a neighbourhood level. The third part will focus on the role of social networks in the context of rural to urban migration. The fourth part will focus on the role of social networks in the economic sphere, discussing studies in which I show the importance of social networks for both employers and employees.



## **2.1. Approaches to the Study of Social Networks**

One of the conceptual challenges faced by theorists following a network approach is related to differentiating between types of networks. Lomnitz (1977) uses a variable called “intensity of exchange” to define networks in terms of the flow of goods, services and economically valuable information between members. Intensity of exchange is defined as the relative measure of reciprocal flow of goods and services in quantity, frequency, and the social value of the exchange.

Lomnitz further suggests in situations of poverty social networks formed on the basis of kinship, friendship and neighbourliness function effectively if members live within walking distance from one another. Social networks are not only limited to the poor, but are also found amongst the middle classes. Given access to resources, middle class networks are maintained through a variety of media including letters, telephones, e-mail, newspapers, websites and so forth (Castells, 1997; Anderson, 1983; Lomnitz, 1977).

Epstein (1969) draws a distinction between two types of networks namely; effective networks on the one hand, and extended networks on the other. According to Epstein networks are said to be effective if members of such networks interact intensely and regularly. Furthermore people in an effective network are also more likely to know each other personally. Epstein continues, “The remainder constitutes an extended network. In other words people who interact less intensely and seldom will constitute one’s extended network.

Bott (1957) categorised networks into two types, namely close-knit networks, and loose-knit networks. Networks are said to be close-knit if members are in such a situation as to permit regular contact. In a close-knit network members visit each other regularly, share ideas, and exchange goods and services. Networks are said to be loose-knit if contact between members is minimal. In other words members exchange goods and services less regularly. Factors such as social class, geographic distance between members, occupation can impact on the nature and functioning of networks (Bott, 1971; Lomnitz, 1977).

Granovetter (1974) applied network analysis to the labour market. He distinguished between two types of networks namely “strong ties” on the one hand and “weak ties” on the other. According to Granovetter one’s strong ties consist of people who interact regularly with each other, know each well, and they will exchange goods and information with each other rather than with other individuals or groups beyond their immediate network.

Weak ties on the other hand will consist of members who interact less with one another, who may even not know each, but who are in turn tied to other people beyond their immediate network. Granovetter suggests that weak ties are important for the diffusion of information beyond one’s immediate network. It is through contacts with individuals who are socially and geographically distant from ego that information can be diffused to distant places. By the same token, one’s ability to access new information that is beyond his immediate area can only be possible if he is linked to other networks beyond his immediate circle.



Scholars who work within a binary model differentiate between networks types in terms of the relationship between actors. Using this criterion scholars differentiate between egocentric and exocentric networks. In an egocentric network members of a network exchange goods and services with one particular person without necessarily exchanging goods and services amongst themselves. In contrast in exocentric networks the exchange of goods and services is not centred on one particular individual, but is practiced by all partners alike. In other words, members of an exocentric network exchange goods and services with every other member of the network (Lomnitz, 1977:132, 134).

Some scholars also draw a distinction between networks that form to accomplish a particular short-term goal, and networks that operate over extended periods. Mayer (1966) used the term "action set" to refer to networks formed to accomplish a particular short-term goal. There are a number of studies that have been conducted in different parts of the world focusing on the mobilisation of social networks for accomplishing temporary objectives. For an example, Boswell (1969) showed the importance of social networks in the mobilisation of people who took part in the organising of three funerals on the Zambian Copperbelt.

## **2.2. Social Networks at a Neighbourhood Level**

Marshall et al (2001) conducted a study to discuss the role of parents' social networks on the psycho-social development of elementary school children. This study discussed both the direct and indirect impact of parents' social networks on children's development. The study investigated such aspects of child development as behaviour problems, social competence, and performance at school.

The above mentioned study made the following findings. Firstly, that children whose parents were involved in parenting social networks performed well at school, had less behaviour problems, and less problems cultivating socially acceptable behaviour, when compared to children whose parents were not members of social networks.

As far as parents were concerned the study found firstly that parents who belonged to parenting networks could easily access the support of neighbours and others in the neighbourhood who could assist with parenting. Secondly such parents could use each other as role models and could apply sanctions to parents who deviated from expected norms. In short the authors concluded that parents who were part of networks were better parents than parents who did not. And children whose parents belonged to social networks developed relatively well compared to those children whose parents did not.

Willmott & Young (1957) wrote about kinship in East London and noted the importance of the mother-daughter bond in the suburb of Bethnal Green. The authors suggest that the mother-daughter bond served the following instrumental functions: mothers could provide child care services especially for their newly wed daughters. Secondly mothers provided emotional support to daughters who had to deal often with problems of alcoholism amongst husbands.

In a study conducted in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement (Cape Town), Yose (1999) reported on the formation of contiguous social networks amongst women. These social networks were important for the exchange of goods and services by local women. The functionality of these social networks was enhanced by the



geographic proximity of dwellings. Neighbours, tenants and landlords formed social networks. And language and kinship ties were considered an important basis for the formation of these networks.

### **2.3. Social Networks and Migration**

In the context of migration, network analysis has been used in order to understand migrants' adaptation strategies. For the newly arrived migrant networks are seen as important for communication of economically vital information, assistance, material assistance (providing the newly arrived migrants with loans money), and help the migrants to find individuals with whom he shares the same cultural values.

Phillip Mayer (1961) uses the social network approach to investigate the relationship between the so-called "red" and "school" Xhosa in East London, two categories of Xhosa migrants in the city of East London. According to Mayer whereas the "red" Xhosa tended to define their social networks in terms of rural area of origin, occupation, and level of formal schooling, "school" Xhosa on the other hand tended to be more flexible in the terms of their networks. School Xhosa tended to associate easily with urban-born Xhosa, as well as other persons they encountered in other contexts such as work.

Pauw (1963) followed the same distinction of "red" and "school" to understand processes of urbanisation amongst East London's isiXhosa-speaking residents. The two studies suggest that social networks were not only important for defining social relations between migrant groups themselves, but also for defining relations between migrant groups and their host communities.

In a study conducted in Mbale, a Ugandan town, Jacobson (1970: 2821-282) explored the factors that motivated the formation and persistence of multi-ethnic social networks amongst the elite. Jacobson found that it was a policy of the Ugandan State to deploy civil servants in different towns depending on necessity. As a result of this policy many of the civil servants had moved at least three times in their lives as a result of their employment in the Ugandan civil service.

The formation and persistence of multi-ethnic social networks amongst the elite was a response to state policy based on their previous experiences of having lived in other parts of Uganda where they also were members of multi-ethnic networks. The elite in Mbale did not find it problematic to forge new social networks. The ordinary people who were less travelled tended to form social networks within their own ethnic group.

In another study Walsh & Simonelli (1985) investigated the importance of social networks in the everyday lives of female migrants in an Oklahoma oil field at the time of an economic boom. The authors suggest that oil field boom town living was harsh for people who were there just to earn a living. They indicate that amongst others difficulties included poor housing conditions, lack of proper sanitation facilities, and the isolation of oil field settlements from mainstream society.

Women's social networks were important for the flow of information between the oil fields and the migrants' places of origin, the flow of job related information, and the reciprocal exchanges of goods and services, and emotional support. Although social



networks served an adaptation function for migrants, this study was unique in that it focused specifically on the experiences of migrant women.

Lamphere (1980) studied the importance of kin-based social networks in the process of immigration from Portugal to the United States of America. Kin-based social networks were important for the following instrumental functions: Firstly, for the transfer of crucial information regarding legislation governing immigration, travel regulations, documentary requirements, the costs of travel, and general information on living standards. This information was passed by immigrants already based in the United States of America to kin who were in Portugal, intending to immigrate.

Secondly, those Portuguese immigrant families that were already settled in the United States assisted new immigrants in practical ways including securing finances required to settle down, finding suitable accommodation, and job placements. The study also suggests as immigrants lived longer in the United States, they broadened their connections decreasing their reliance on their kin-based networks.

#### **2.4. Class, Culture and Social Networks**

Questions can be posed regarding the relationship between networks and social class. Studies conducted amongst the middle classes in both town and country in English society suggest that social networks owe their existence to shared cultural norms and values that develop as a result of residence in a particular locality. In such a context the social networks that develop on the basis of kinship, friendship or neighbourhood ties function to regulate social relations between groups and

individuals within the locality, and to distinguish that locality from others of a similar kind (Strathern, 1980).

Hubert (1965) conducted a study on the significance of social networks amongst the middle class communities in London. The study made the following findings: firstly, rural migrants arriving in London depended on their own personal resources (rather than the support of kin) in such matters as housing, finances, and finding jobs. Secondly, the study found that middle classes English migrants in London tended to move there to take employment rather than hoping to seek it on arrival. Thirdly, although some of the migrants who arrived in London had kin there, migrants did not look to them for assistance. One of the explanations for this is that middle class migrants had enough of their own resources for their survival.

Writing about kin networks amongst African Americans, Sharon Smith (1998:72) observed that: "most African American families can best be viewed from a perspective of a kin network not a nuclear family. The kin network considers both blood and non-blood kin as a helping network meeting daily material and social-emotional needs of its members. Consequently, kin networks represent an alternative source of social support, one that for African Americans frequently compensates for resources withheld in broader society."

Smith suggests that for African Americans the kin-based social network is important for the everyday survival of the African American community. The kin network cushions African Americans from the hardships imposed on them by a society that is dominated by Anglo-Saxon values. Smith suggests further, in line with other



scholars of African Americans in the United States that the structure of the African American family, and functions it performs for its members must be understood in relation to the historical experiences of African Americans as a group. For example, despite the fact that African Americans were enslaved for 200 years, even after slavery was abolished African Americans continued to live in a society whose political and economic institutions discriminated against them on the basis of race.

Sharp & Spiegel (1986) suggested in a study conducted in Qwaqwa, a former homeland area during the apartheid era, (present day Free State), that given the widespread poverty amongst the households they studied, social networks of kinship and neighbourhood that would have acted as an alternative source of informal support were becoming eroded thus leaving households vulnerable to impoverishment. Following this study, Spiegel et al (1999) investigated the question of household composition amongst African households in relation to the housing policy of the state.

Sharp et al (2000) dealt with the question of kinship and its role in land invasions. Sharp and his associates suggested that in present day Cape Town, characterised by land invasions, some members of large extended households were founding households of their own, in response to availability of land in free-standing informal settlements. Field research in the study area showed that members of the new settlement continued to maintain ties with their kin based in other parts of Cape Town as well as in the rural Eastern Cape.

A number of sociological studies have been conducted investigating the impact of urbanisation on household structure. In a comparative study of household structure amongst the Coloured and African population groups in the Cape Flats, Amoateng (1998:29) concluded that on the whole, there is a general movement towards the nuclear family type in the two communities. According to Amoateng, this finding lends support to the view that "urban black family patterns are converging towards their Western, white compatriots..." Amoateng attributed the move towards nuclearization of the family to two factors, namely residence of households in an urban environment, and secondly their involvement in the capitalist labour market.

However, as far as the African population group is concerned, Amoateng's conclusions are questionable, especially if viewed in the light of the findings of other studies completed at about the same period. Thus in a study comparing household forms between Whites and Africans, Ziehl (1994) found that amongst the White population the nuclear family was the dominant form of family organisation. And the same study found that for the African population group the extended family was the most dominant family arrangement. Ziehl concluded that as far as the Black family is concerned the cultural emphasis on the maintenance of kin ties combines with low socio-economic position to make the extended household the most predominant form of family organisation.

In a debate on the structure of African and Coloured households, Koen (1998:171) proposed "a...flexible approach that focus on macro- and micro- elements of household formation and looks at kinship and economic bonds both within and beyond families and households. By drawing attention to the net gains that accrue



from household arrangements; the household's defensive orientation during times of poverty, the optimising strategies that household members use, and the effect of this on household size and models of cooperation and exchange, the household is...viewed as a complex ensemble of economic forces. " This contention is in line with arguments made in other studies regarding factors affecting the structure and stability of households in urban and rural areas, and relationships which exist between them (Smith & Wallenstein, 1992; Niehaus, 1994, Spiegel et al, 1996).

Network analysis was also applied to understand the complex relationships between individuals' networks and the relationship of these networks to other societal institutions. In a study investigating the formation and persistence of social networks amongst Danish Americans, Chrisman (1970:248) writes that "the many institutional frameworks of a society are the structural features in the social system which can influence the formation and persistence of groups and which can also provide the arena within which the network relations may form."

Chrisman suggests that although members of the Danish American community he studied may have collectively belonged together to a common club; they are also simultaneously linked to various other societal institutions such as kin groups, religious organisations, trade unions, and occupational associations. Chrisman suggests in the social networks of Danish Americans were equally complex reflecting the institutions of the society in which they live. Chrisman suggests the nature and function of social networks are in part determined by other societal institutions so that these networks do not function in isolation but in tandem with other institutions of the society.

Srinivas & Beteille (1964) conducted research in India demonstrating the importance of the social network concept in understanding societies undergoing rapid social change. These authors showed the complex ways in which certain individuals and groups were linked to other individuals and groups who were beyond the borders of their village. By studying these social connections between individuals and groups one can understand the diffusion of new ideas into the village and the persons and groups through which the ideas were transmitted.

## **2.5. Social Networks in the Economic Sphere**

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of social networks for marginalized groups in the society (Yose, 1999; Lomnitz, 1977; Stack, 1974). Recently Castells (1997) characterised the world as a network society. This characterisation of the world as network society is important because it acknowledges that people everywhere irrespective of classes, occupation, ethnic belonging, are able to form networks in order to enhance their own interests. In the next sections I will discuss the role of social networks amongst agricultural traders, and bankers. I will then continue to look at the importance of social networks in the labour market, for both employers and employees.

Fafchamps & Minten (1999: 1) conducted a study in order to determine the importance of personal relationships amongst agricultural traders in Madagascar. The study found the following: firstly, that agricultural traders were of the perception that personal relationships were the most important factor determining success in the business. Secondly, the study also found that agricultural traders used personal contacts in order to handle contractual issues, circulate information about prices, and



to determine the credit worthiness of certain farmers. The study concluded that the most successful farmers were those who both qualitatively and quantitatively had better personal relationships.

In another context a study was conducted amongst bankers in a middle size corporate bank in the United States of America to determine the importance of social networks in bank decision making (Mizruchi & Stearns , 2001). The authors show that bankers rely on social connections in order to determine the credit worthiness of certain clients. Bankers utilise objective criteria such income of clients, their track record, and data from credit institutions to determine whether or not to grant loan application. However in addition to these objective criteria, bankers judge clients' credit worthiness on the basis of information from colleagues. In this regard the study found that if bankers had information about a particular client from both internal and external sources the better they were placed to make an informed judgement about the client.

Petersen, et al (2001) conducted a study to determine the importance of social networks on the employment process in a middle size high technology company situated in Silicon Valley. The findings suggest that about 60.4% of job applicants were identified through social networks. Furthermore, of the total number of people who learnt of the jobs through personal networks, 88.8% of them got job offers. One may ask why is it important for employers to rely on social networks to identify prospective employees? There are four reasons that I will discuss below. Firstly, one explanation is that employers believe that reliance on social networks decreases

the level of uncertainty. Employers see it as rational to employ someone who has been referred by someone they trust rather than someone they do not know.

Secondly, by relying on social networks to identify prospective employees, employers do not have to screen prospective employees or follow lengthy procedures as the case may be when seeking to employ someone they do not know. Thirdly, employers who rely on employees' social networks to identify prospective employees save on advertising costs (Petersen, 2000; Fernandez, 2000). Fourthly, employers who use employees' social connections to identify prospective employees view their employees social connections as resources in which they can invest in order to gain economic outcomes in the form of better hiring outcomes (Fernandez, et al, 2000:1289).

However, some authors have argued against the use of social networks as a method to identify prospective employers. They point out that this method of hiring is likely to benefit males rather than women. It is argued men are extensively attached to the labour market. This is due to the fact that males work more hours, they do more jobs, and travel to distant places so that they get exposed to more job opportunities than women. This occurs as a result of sheer frequency of contact where information about jobs is collected, and professional networks are built (Petersen, et al: 2000:769). Women are by definition excluded from these connections since most of them spent time in the home front rather than in the labour market.

Poldonly & Baron (1997) point out that many scholars have paid too much attention to the formalities of upward mobility within the work place, and underestimated the



role of social networks in this process. The authors suggest that social networks have a central role to play in the work place regarding upward mobility. The authors suggest, firstly, that social networks that operate within the organisation help to create a clear normative framework within which individuals can structure their relationships with each other in the context of the organisation. Within this framework roles, expectations, and obligations of workers towards each other and the organisation are determined.

Secondly, it is this framework that give both senior and junior employees a sense of belonging in the organisation. In this context junior employees establish social networks with their supervisors and other influential personnel in the organisation with the intention of maximising their chances for career advancement. The authors also point out that if the expectations of various senior staff are diverse and in conflict with each other then this may make it difficult for junior colleagues to satisfy the expectations of their senior colleagues. This may in turn impact negatively on juniors' chances of upward mobility within the organisation.

However, if the expectations of senior colleagues within an organisation are in agreement with one another then the easier it is for junior colleagues to satisfy the expectations of their senior colleagues. This in turn also enhances the opportunity that junior colleagues have to advance within the organisation. The authors suggest further that junior colleagues therefore see it as imperative to sustain informal links with their senior colleagues in different parts of the organisation. They do so deliberately to enhance their chances for upward mobility in the work place.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

Since social network analysis came into being in the 1950s it has proved to be a popular approach with both anthropologists and sociologists alike. However theorists have had to deal with two conceptual issues. The first was finding an appropriate term for defining what a network is, and the second is related to differentiating between network types. In the first instance theorists used concepts such as network, field, circle, star and so forth interchangeably. However the concept of network has succeeded to out do the rest, so that it is widely used and understood to this day.

Having arrived at a consensus regarding what a network is, scholars have had to deal with the question of differentiating between the different types of social network. Some scholars have found it useful for analytical purposes, to differentiate between networks in terms of density. Scholars thus spoke of “loose-knit” or “close knit” networks. And others spoke of “weak” and “strong” ties, whilst others differentiated between networks on the basis of the regularity, and intensity of reciprocal exchanges between members of a network.

Scholars also draw a distinction between networks in terms of the directional flow of goods and services. If members of a network exchange goods and services with one particular person, so that the different members do not exchange goods with each other to the same extent, then that type of network is referred to as being egocentric. On the hand if all other members of a network exchange goods with each other so that the exchanges are not centred on one particular person, then network is referred to as being exocentric.



In discussing networks I have shown the role of geographical and social distance on the establishment and functioning social networks. If members of a network live adjacent to each other, the intensity of exchanges between them is enhanced. By the same token if physical distance between members is increased, the interaction between members of such a network is decreased. This applies particularly in amongst working class communities in which social networks are important for meeting the immediate needs of residents on a daily basis. As far as the poorer sections of society are concerned, social networks function in order to meet immediate material needs.

On the other hand, amongst the middle classes social networks do not owe their existence to material needs of residence. Social networks owe their existence to shared cultural norms and values that develop as a result of residence in a particular locality. In such a context the social networks that develop on the basis of kinship, friendship or neighbourhood ties function to regulate social relations between groups and individuals within the locality, and distinguish that locality to others of a similar kind.

Finally, I demonstrated the importance of social networks in the sphere of economic life. I showed the importance of social relationships in formalised bureaucratic organisations. I also showed the importance of social networks particularly with regard to the gathering of information about clients and the making of decisions within the banking industry. Similarly, it has been shown that agricultural traders regard social relationships as playing a crucial role with regard to determining one's success in the agricultural trade. Agricultural traders therefore passed information

about prices, credit worthiness of certain farmers, adoption of new technologies, and so forth. Furthermore networks have proved useful in the labour market for both employers and employees. Employers use their employees in order to identify prospective staff, whilst on the other hand employees use their connections to seek for new jobs. The social network approach has thus shown to be useful in analysing interactions between individuals, groups (irrespective of size), organisations, and the diffusion and adoption of new ideas.



## Chapter 3

### The Marconi Beam Land Invasion and the Road to Joe Slovo Park

#### 3. Introduction

As of the 1980s and the 1990s, South African cities witnessed the emergence of a new social phenomenon, namely land invasions. Land invasions emerged slowly in the 1980s, so that by the 1990s they had become one of the most common ways by which the poor particularly in the urban areas could access land. In 1990, it was estimated that 800 000 people lived in South Africa's informal settlements (Swilling, et al: 1991). According to another estimate a third of Durban's population lived on invaded land in informal settlements (Hindson & McCarthy: 1994).

Given the rapid political changes of the 1990s the apartheid regime found itself vulnerable, and thus unable to control the disorderly manner in which urban change was taking place. The urban crisis that started with the rent and services boycotts, and then land invasions in the 1990s reflected the political crisis that the state was facing at the time. Many trade unions, non-government organisations, civic organisations, sports clubs and so forth supported this resistance. This chapter focuses on the historical origin and development of the Marconi Beam land invasion, and its political significance within the Blaauwberg Municipality. This land invasion took place in 1990 in northern Cape Town on prime industrial land<sup>3</sup>. One

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<sup>3</sup> The Marconi Beam land invasion can be likened to another land invasion that took place in Wattville (on the East Rand) in the white town council of Benoni. In 1990, the residents of Wattville invaded a piece of strategically placed land within walking distance to the then white town of Benoni. This land invasion was organised by community leaders of Wattville Township in response to over crowding in Wattville. According to a survey carried out in 1991, 80% of Wattville residents, employed in Benoni walked rather than commuting to work as is the case with many township residents. Secondly, in both cases the first land invasion led to a second one. For example in Wattville residents carried out another land invasion and established an informal settlement that they called Tamboville 2. The Marconi Beam and

fundamental difference with regard to this land invasion was the geographic location of the land being invaded. This land was privately owned and situated on a zone that was at time experiencing economic growth. In the next paragraph I discuss the story of the Marconi Beam land invasion in more detail.

### **3.1. The Historical Background of Joe Slovo Park**

In 1990, a group of male employees at the Milnerton Racecourse embarked on strike action. These employees demanded the following: higher wages, better working conditions, and that single sex hostels be converted into proper housing units capable to accommodate entire families. Employers responded by calling for police intervention.

Because these workers were dependent on their employers for lodgings, their removal from the premises of the racecourse left them homeless. These workers however had two options through which to address their problem of shelter. The first option was to head for the African townships around the Cape Metropolitan Area, to find refuge with kin, friends, or acquaintances. The second option was to find refuge in the bushes near the racecourse itself until the labour dispute was resolved.

Whilst a fraction of workers found refuge with kin, friends and acquaintances, the remaining proportion of workers found shelter in the bushes in Milnerton with only the skies over their heads, depending on the fires they burnt throughout the night to keep

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Wattville land invasions transformed the social geography of the two white town councils. This is because prior to the land invasions there was no agenda by the two town councils to provide housing to the African section of the population.



themselves warm. There they camped for a few nights, joining women hawkers who had been living in these bushes illegally for sometime.

These women hawkers were selling meat and African beer to workers who were employed in the Montague Gardens Industrial Township and the neighbouring predominantly white suburbs. Most of these women came to Cape Town in order to collect remittances from husbands who had been in town too long. Given the difficulty which some of the women encountered in tracing their loved ones, they ended up remaining in town, relying on illegal brewing and sale of African beer. Women in particular played a significant role in the struggles leading to this land invasion. Mrs Jongilanga (Personal communication: 23 March, 2000) said,

"I came here (meaning Cape Town) from the Transkei to look for my husband, Jongilanga. I brought my son with me who was three years old and very ill. I met Nzotho my homeboy in Langa, who then brought me to the stables here in Milnerton. I approached a white man that was said to be in charge of the stable. I told him that I was looking for Jongilanga, my husband. I also told him that my son was ill. Instead this man invited the police to come and arrest me on charges of trespass. I spent several days in jail until my husband found me there. After my husband had paid a fine my son and I were released. I went back to the bushes of Milnerton, continuing to brew and sell African beer. We were constantly harassed by the police, running from one corner of the bush to the other, some of us with children on our backs. I remember there was also a pregnant woman amongst us who was also looking for her husband. When she tried to ask one of the white men in charge about her

husband she received a very rude response. This woman knelt down her knees begging this man for her husband, instead this white man responded by threatening to call the police.”

Later the men went ahead to construct a few informal dwellings in the bushes. The local municipality responded by calling for police in order to remove the squatters from the site. The local municipal authorities called on the police to remove the small group of men who were seen sleeping and cooking in the bushes of Milnerton. This group of people, however, resisted both removal and arrest thus inviting open conflict with the police. However the municipality asked the police to withdraw fearing that further clashes would attract negative political publicity for the then Milnerton Municipality.

### **3.2. The Establishment of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement**

With police withdrawal, a fully-fledged informal settlement was established near Milnerton, on a piece of privately owned prime land found in the Montague Gardens Industrial Township<sup>4</sup>. In matter of a few months, this informal settlement was home to people from many parts of metropolitan Cape Town, other small towns of the Western Cape and the rural parts of the Eastern Cape. However it is individuals who

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<sup>4</sup>According to the owners of the site, the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were occupying the site illegally. On the other hand the residents of the Marconi Beam believed that they had as much a right to remain on the land. From that perspective land invasions particularly those affecting former white suburbs enjoyed the support of many anti apartheid campaigners.



originated in the rural Eastern Cape that constituted the majority of the residents of Marconi Beam informal settlement. Due to its economic value, this land invasion did not only concern the owner of the invaded land, but the entire business community owning property on the Montague Gardens Industrial Township.

Another sector within the local municipality affected by this land invasion was the residential property owners in the neighbouring suburbs of Milnerton, Bloubergstrand and Table View. The above-mentioned suburbs were defined as white settlement areas in terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950 (as amended in 1966). One cannot explain the concerns of residents living in these exclusively white settlements solely as resulting from their support for the policy of racial segregation in the cities. Middle class residents in northern Cape Town, just like any other middle class residents anywhere in South Africa, associated the establishment of an informal settlement in their vicinity with the depreciation of property values, an increase in crime and the deterioration of health conditions.

Yet for the squatters this land invasion was a positive move. Firstly, the informal settlement stood on a favourable location within an Industrial Township. The residents of this informal settlement were thus appropriately located within walking distance from job opportunities. Indeed the distance from the informal settlement to the factories in Montague Gardens was less than five minutes walk.

Secondly, the informal settlement was located along the Koeberg Road Economic Corridor. Along this road are fast food outlets, restaurants, petrol filling stations, garages, supermarkets, second hand furniture shops, and other establishments of

economic significance. Thirdly, this informal settlement was situated five kilometres away from the Cape Town Central Business District<sup>5</sup>. Fourthly, the Marconi Beam Informal was situated near white residential suburbs. Consequently, both men and women living in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement provided a labour pool to the middle class residents who lived in the surrounding suburbs.

A major characteristic distinguishing this particular land invasion from the rest was its location in relation to places of economic significance. The Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was located in an area with employment opportunities. For this reason there were people from various parts of Cape Town relocated or settled in Marconi informal Settlement with the hope that they would benefit economically. More discussion on the employment situation in Marconi Beam and Joe Slovo Park will follow in chapter six.

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<sup>5</sup> At about the same time another land invasion took place in the Southern Peninsular suburb of Houtbay. In contrast to the Marconi Beam land invasion that took place on industrial land, about five kilometres from the Cape Town central business district, the Houtbay land invasion affected land that was situated on the rural periphery of Cape Town. Those who carried out this land invasion were employed in the fishing sector of Houtbay. Just like the Marconi Beam land invasion this land took place very near to the former white suburb of Houtbay. This informal settlement was called Imizamoyethu. The majority of the residents were also migrants from the Eastern Cape. Thirdly, immigrant Africans from Angola and Namibia also inhabited Imizamoyethu Informal Settlement. From the beginning the residents of the Houtbay suburb took interest in the well being of the development of the informal settlement. Since the settlement begun a community centre, two schools and children's home have been built in the settlement. More recently the Imizamoyethu Informal Settlement has attracted the attention of an Irish business man whose intention to invest in the development of housing and other infrastructure in the settlement.



### **3.3. The Stakeholders**

The following stakeholders took part in the negotiations of the Marconi Beam land invasion case:

Development Action Group

Milnerton Action Group

Milnerton Municipality

Milnerton Forum

Milnerton Rate Payers Association

Marconi Action Forum

Montague Gardens Industrial Association

Sanco Marconi Beam

Table View Community Association

Provincial Roads Engineer

Cape Provincial Administration: Planning

Judging by the list of stakeholders, one can conclude that these negotiations were inclusive. However given the constant consultation that took place between the delegates and their constituencies the negotiations took long to complete. Mr Crusor (Personal communication, June 2000) said,

“The political process took a lot of time. For a long time no real progress could be made. Those of us who dealt with this issue on a daily basis became exhausted after a while.”

As the negotiators became exhausted, it became impossible to report back to the residents on every decision taken. On the other hand, the beneficiaries of the Marconi Beam Housing Project felt that their representatives were beginning to default on the democratic process. As more and more decisions were taken behind closed doors, political tensions emerged between the beneficiaries and the Marconi Beam Development Trust, a multi party body whose role was to manage the everyday affairs relating to the Marconi Beam Housing Project. The beneficiaries alleged that some of the office bearers were involved in corrupt practices. These corrupt practices included moving people up on the housing list for money and sexual favours. Secondly, the residents were concerned that whilst the negotiations were dragging on they were continuing to fall victim of the Marconi Beam fires.

Following the above grievances, the residents of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement marched on the offices of the Marconi Beam Development Trust. The Marconi Beam Housing Project show village was marched on, and sit-ins were staged. Amidst these political crises the Marconi Beam Housing Project was temporarily halted, and negotiations were started to address the grievances of the beneficiaries.

The officials of the Blaauwberg Municipality and some of the community leaders who served on the board of the Marconi Beam Development Trust claimed the political unrest was stirred by a few agitators who were seeking to enhance their political standing in the community. Mr Johnson (Personal communication, July 1998), one of the officials who was critical of these political marches said,



“My friend you know amongst the black people if you can speak English many people will believe everything you say whether it is right or wrong. You know in the land of the blind the man with one eye is king.”

The above maxim sums up the views of many officials who were charged with implementing the Marconi Beam Housing Project. The story of the Marconi Beam Housing Project is a lesson in the ways by which democracy works. It is the story of grievances, protests and consultative decision-making. Despite these difficulties headway was made in the Marconi Beam Housing Project, and a deal was struck. This agreement paved a way towards the finalisation of the Marconi Beam land invasion saga. In the next section I present the terms of agreement.

### **3.4. The Terms of the Marconi Beam Housing Agreement**

- (a) It was agreed that a formal low cost housing project would be started in order to provide housing for the residents of Marconi Beam Informal settlement. The new suburb was to be called Joe Slovo Park, named after the minister of housing of the first democratically elected government of South Africa.
- (b) The construction of the Joe Slovo Park suburb was to take place on a piece of land within Montague Gardens Industrial Township. The site on which this low cost development was to take place was not bought but donated by Telkom, a government telecommunications corporation.

- (c) The local municipality conducted a shack count (as mandated by the negotiators), according to which the number of shacks was set at approximately 840.
- (d) A housing list was compiled consisting of individuals and families resident in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. Accordingly, the allocation of the proposed housing in Joe Slovo Park was to follow this list.
- (e) It was agreed further that after the “shack count” no new residents were to enter and erect new dwellings in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. The officially recognised residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were expected to assist the authorities in monitoring the settlement. The monitoring of the influx of new comers into the informal settlement was deemed necessary in order to enable the municipality to execute the proposed low cost housing project as planned.
- (f) In terms of the agreement reached in the negotiations, all persons resident in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement who could not be housed in Joe Slovo Park were automatically eligible beneficiaries in another low cost housing project in a site called Du Noon. The Du Noon low cost Housing Project can thus be considered as a second phase of the Marconi Beam Housing Project.
- (g) Residents who were taking up housing in Joe Slovo Park were expected to demolish their informal dwellings in Marconi Beam informal Settlement,



and no informal dwellings were to be allowed in Joe Slovo Park. The demolition of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement marked the success of the negotiations. Furthermore, it cleared the way for industrial projects to commence on that land.

### **3.5. The Residents' Response to the Agreement**

The first set of housing in Joe Slovo Park including a show village was completed by 1996. In 1999 when this housing project was declared officially finished, with the number of houses built were estimated at 1000. However the completion of this project was not smooth. Simultaneously, as new houses were being built in Joe Slovo Park there were new individuals entering and constructing new informal dwellings in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

Firstly, some of the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement who were involved in petty trading wanted to occupy their new homes in Joe Slovo Park, yet they wanted to keep their shacks intact for business purposes. Secondly, amongst the beneficiary population there were residents who needed to keep their dwellings in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement for use by kin who were arriving from the countryside. The relocation of people from Marconi Beam Informal Settlement to Joe Slovo Park took about three years to complete.

From the vantage point of the municipal authorities, with the construction of new informal dwellings on the Marconi Beam site nullified the entire aim of resettling the poor in formal housing. The municipal authorities were also of the opinion that the proliferation of informal housing simultaneously with the Marconi Beam Housing

Project represented the failure of the ideals of rationality in the sphere of town planning. Thirdly, the municipality interpreted the unsanitary conditions obtaining in the informal settlement, as a health hazard, not only to the residents of the informal settlement, but to all the citizens residing within the Blaauwberg municipal area. In other words, by introducing voluntary containment the municipal authorities sought to minimise the deterioration of health conditions in the municipal area.

From the vantage point of the municipal authorities a containment of the influx of people into Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was necessary in order to enable systematic planning. The municipal authorities feared that if the influx of new residents into Joe Slovo Park was left unchecked, they would have to provide more housing units than it was initially planned. One official, Mr. Bezeidenhout (Personal communication, July 1998), who was in charge of the Marconi Beam Housing Project expressed the matter as follows:

“My friend, there are many people from the Eastern Cape flocking into Marconi Beam. If you want to see what I am talking about you must go to Epping Bus Terminus in Langa. You will see people coming from the Transkei and those places being off loaded from buses, put on to taxis and private cars. All these people come to Marconi Beam Squatter Settlement. On arrival here they stay with their relatives. In turn these newly arrived from the country invite their friends and relatives to come to Cape Town. All these people expect to get houses. We receive people on a daily basis asking about their houses, most of them are not on our original list and they therefore do not qualify for houses here”.



Mr Bezeidenhout, (Personal communication, July, 1998) continued:

“If you tell them they do not qualify for houses they get mad at you, telling you that as a white person you do not understand suffering because you have not experienced it. Alright I am white, I understand that people were oppressed but there needs to be some planning and order. Otherwise we will not make any progress in this housing project and even people who deserve houses will not get them”.

As the above ethnographic accounts show, the poor (especially Africans) responded by using the discourse of race in order to negotiate their way into the city. The poor were therefore not mere victims of the transition process, in many ways they acted as agents of their own destiny. This state of affairs made it difficult for planners and administrators to manage this housing development project smoothly.

The problem of containing the increase in the number of informal settlement residents was not limited to the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. For example, a study conducted for the Cape Metropolitan Council by Abbot & Douglas (1998) noted that informal settlements tended to experience population growth soon after they were established. Bekker (2000) attributed the influx of Eastern Cape households into the Western Cape to the comparative advantage that the latter enjoys over the former.

Another sector upset by the persistence of informal housing on the Marconi Beam site were the local industrialists owning fixed property in Montague Gardens

Industrial Township. According to the local business elite, the physical presence of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement in Montague Gardens created a negative impression about the Montague Gardens Industrial Township. Local industrialists argued further that the negative picture painted about the Montague Gardens Industrial Township discouraged local industrial growth. Telkom, a telecommunications company owned by the South African government also had business interests in the Montague Gardens Industrial Township. In order to facilitate the completion of the Marconi Beam Housing Project, Telkom donated a piece of land to the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. On this land Joe Slovo Park was ultimately built.

However, the residents of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement contest the argument that the land on which the Joe Slovo Park housing stood was merely a donation from the white dominated corporate sector. They insist that their right to remain in the informal settlement as well as the decision of the local municipality to go ahead with the building of the suburb of Joe Slovo Park was the result of struggles, which they as the residents have launched against the apartheid regime. The residents were adamant that there is no way the whites could have decided on their own to donate land to Africans. As one of the residents Mr Dikeni (Personal communication, 1998) put it:

"Whites will never give something to black people. From when have whites understood that black people are human beings too, who deserve to live decent lives? Everything we have was acquired forcefully. A white person will never give you anything; he rather robs of something that is rightfully yours.



We blacks must thank Mandela he stayed in prison so that we too can become human beings. It was also him who demanded that we remain in Marconi Beam."

Moreover, middle class residents owning residential property in the neighbouring suburbs were opposed to the development of an informal settlement near their homes. These residents believed that the proximity of an informal settlement near their suburbs would lead to the depreciation of residential property values, increase crime levels, and cause a decline in health standards.

The relocation of Marconi Beam residents to Joe Slovo Park made evident the fact that the number of houses established through the housing project was insufficient. There were simply many beneficiaries than there were houses. As a result, an agreement was reached that all the persons or families who qualified for housing but yet could not be housed in Joe Slovo Park automatically qualified for houses in Du Noon. In Du Noon a housing development was soon established. The Du Noon site was situated approximately three kilometres from Joe Slovo Park.

Viewed in that light, the waiting list could be seen as bureaucratic instrument whose function was to facilitate housing allocation to a deserving category of people. However a closer scrutiny of South African history with regard to housing suggest that although this housing list was meant to enable certain people to get houses, in the main this housing list (as did other housing lists in other South African cities hit by housing shortages) served as an instrument of exclusion. African people in particular who had been barred by institutional arrangements to enter South African cities

found in the 1990s that their right to realise their dream of being urbanised was dependent on whether or not they were on the housing waiting list.

### **3.6.Conclusions**

This chapter focused on the historical origins of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. It has been shown in this regard that the Marconi Beam Land Invasion resulted out of a workers strike by employees of the Milnerton racecourse. Workers demanded a living wage, and an improvement in their living conditions. Following the strike action, workers were expelled from premises of the Cape Turf Club. Workers then settled in the Milnerton bushes, after which they constructed informal dwellings to shelter themselves.

The Marconi Beam Land Invasion was not an isolated event. In the 1990s many land invasions occurred in different metropolitan centres and towns. Although these land invasions were not directly organised by the leaders of the anti apartheid organisations such as civic associations, they were political in nature. By invading land, local populations actively expressed their non-recognition of the municipal authorities that were in the eyes of the disenfranchised African population seen as serving the interests of the apartheid state.

Yet there are a few reasons why the Marconi Beam land invasion stood out from the rest. Firstly, the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement stood on land that was zoned for industrial uses. However, the land invaded was not the property of the local municipality, but it belonged to Rabie Cavca, a property development company. Secondly, the informal settlement was established literally across the road from the



middle class suburb of Milnerton. The Marconi Beam became a subject of serious political deliberation. When it became clear to both the local municipality and the proprietors that removing the invaders by force would attract negative political attention from the liberation movements and other liberally orientated organisations, the authorities opted for a negotiated settlement.

Following the decision to negotiate, many stakeholders, including community representatives, a non-government organisation, owners of the land, ratepayers associations of the neighbouring suburbs, were brought to the table to discuss the fate of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. The negotiations took long to complete, especially because of the various political positions held by the stakeholders.

Despite differences in political views, a compromise was reached according to which the residents of Marconi Beam were to be relocated in a nearby piece of land. On that land a working class suburb was to be built called Joe Slovo Park. Although not everyone was entirely satisfied with the agreement, its import was that it emerged out of a thorough consultative process that included various stakeholders. For that reason whatever the political positions held by the particular parties, the settlement itself enjoyed considerable legitimacy. The manner in which the Marconi Beam land invasion issue was handled is laudable especially taking account of the parties that participated. That the Marconi beam land invasion was ultimately resolved despite the challenges faced by the negotiators is indicative of the political commitment to the process.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Urban Migrants' Social Networks**

#### **4. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I introduced the Marconi Beam land invasion, showing how it led to the formation of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. I also referred to the agreement reached between the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, and other stakeholders according to which the Marconi Beam Housing Project would be initiated to provide 800 housing units to persons who were resident in the informal settlement.

Since the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was a transit camp services such as running water, sanitation and electricity were not in existence. Residents fetched water from communal street taps, used paraffin stoves for cooking, whilst at night candles were used for illumination. Paraffin stoves and candles if left unattended during the night usually caused home fires in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

Given the physical proximity of dwellings to each other, a fire started in one dwelling normally spread across the entire settlement devastating hundreds of other dwellings. In these fires people's homes were razed to the ground, their belongings including furniture, appliances, clothing and money were lost. Secondly, given climatic conditions prevailing in the Cape Peninsula the residents usually experience long rainy seasons, starting in winter through to spring and summer.



Due to the poor workmanship characterising makeshift housing, and drainage of the land, it was common for people's homes to be flooded. Such instances resulted in situations in which residents' material belongings were either damaged or washed away. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on residents' social networks at the time of residence in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

I do this by discussing Jadezweni's biography, one of the residents of Marconi Beam informal settlement who later got a house in Joe Slovo Park. I hope that approaching the above question by means of a biography I will better be able to understand the various social networks that migrants were embedded in, the relationship between members of such networks, the exchanges that occurred through networks, nature and size of the commodities exchanged, and the circumstances under which these networks were activated. In the next section I turn to Jadezweni's biography.

#### **4.1. Case No 1: The Biography of Christopher Jadezweni**

**Jadezweni was born in 1953 in the village of Tsolo, in the Eastern Cape Province. After finishing standard two, and undergoing initiation Jadezweni moved to Cape Town in 1982 to look for a job. Given the influx control laws Jadezweni's uncle found him a job at the Milnerton racecourse. Towards the middle of 1985 Jadezweni landed another job as a gardener in one of the homes of in Milnerton. Jadezweni's new employers also provided him with accommodation. During that time he also moved out of the Milnerton racecourse. In addition to gardening Jadezweni started crafting and selling wooden utensils, tablecloths, and second hand clothing. His father sold most of these clothes back in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. His business**

flourished, and Jadezweni opened his first bank account, as well as sending money back to his father's homestead in the rural areas.

In 1990 the Marconi Beam land invasion occurred. Jadezweni took the opportunity to build himself an informal dwelling in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. On arriving in Marconi Beam Jadezweni bought a camera and he established himself as the settlement's photographer, and hawker. Remittances to his father also grew. However it was not long when the residents of Marconi Beam first tasted the realities of living in informal housing, a fire struck destroying several hundreds of dwellings. On that fateful day Jadezweni and many others lost all their belongings including food, clothes, furniture, and money. Yet Jadezweni escaped with his camera. In addition Jadezweni's business was also brought to an abrupt termination. Jadezweni turned to his father who was in the rural areas. The latter loaned Jadezweni money to buy building materials and to get the business off the ground. A few months later when his business was still recovering another fire struck. Jadezweni left Marconi Beam Informal Settlement for his father's household in the rural areas. Arriving there he attempted to establish himself as a carpenter, but there was hardly anyone who was interested in his goods. Again with the assistance of his father Jadezweni returned to Cape Town and restarted his business.

In 1997 Jadezweni got his house in Joe Slovo Park. Jadezweni transformed his home into a house shop, and built informal dwellings at the back of his house. For three years Jadezweni ran his business from his formal house whilst he



and other members of his household continued living in informal dwellings built to the back of his house. At the time of the research Jadezweni lived in his home with his wife, sister, his younger brother and four children, two boys and two girls. Furthermore, from time to time his household accommodates, on a short-term basis kin and other village mates who arrive from the rural areas to look for work or attend some important matters. With his business doing well Jadezweni has extended his house, and installed security gates, and bought new furniture. The relative stability of Joe Slovo Park has set Jadezweni on the route to prosperity. Since arriving in Joe Slovo Park Jadezweni acquired two small trucks that he uses for his businesses. In order to broaden his income generating horizons Jadezweni has been instrumental in the establishment of a savings club. Membership in this savings club was open to everyone. The members of this savings club met once a month to discuss matters of common interest. The money accumulated was used to buy household goods such as furniture, utensils, crockery, and so forth. These goods are also used to assist members during such circumstances as deaths, marriages, and initiation ceremonies. Commonly members of the savings club sent most of the goods acquired were sent back to rural households. Jadezweni like many migrants resident in Joe Slovo Park holds that his genuine home is in the countryside where his father still lives, and that he is in Cape Town to work. For this reason Jadezweni remits to his father in the Eastern Cape. In the year 2000 Jadezweni bought his father a tractor valued at R42 000,00. His father uses the tractor for ploughing the fields. Jadezweni has also bought cattle in the rural areas that he left in the care of his father. When I last spoke to him he claimed his cattle have increased in number to thirty-five.



In addition Jadezweni claims he was instrumental in assisting his brother who at the time of the research was becoming influential in the taxi industry. Jadezweni's brother lived in Khayelitsha (a teeming township with areas of both formal and informal settlements). Jadezweni once said, "just like the weather" business is unpredictable. One who is successful today can be down and out tomorrow.

Near Joe Slovo Park there is another suburb known as Phoenix Village. Jadezweni's maternal uncle lives there. Jadezweni's uncle recently requested that Themba, Jadezweni's younger brother come and live in his house. When I asked why Jadezweni said, "my uncle has always seen it as his responsibility to look after us, his sister's children. When I first arrived in Cape Town I also lived with him at the stables." I was surprised to discover that Jadezweni had other extended kin in Khayelitsha, Nyanga and Crossroads. What surprised me was that up until then these extended kin were hardly mentioned in my encounters with Jadezweni. What raised questions in my mind was that although Jadezweni suffered from at least two fire disasters in which he had lost most of his belongings, he had turned to his father for support and not any of his kin who were based in Cape Town. In one of my numerous and usual visits to Jadezweni he told me one of his kin had died in Johannesburg. Funeral arrangements were underway, and he was expecting his brother, uncles, and some other distant relatives who were coming to discuss funerals final matters relating to amongst others the transportation of the body of the deceased from Johannesburg to his native village. In the context of that discussion I gathered that the practice of burying urban migrants in the rural



areas of origin was very common, and in many cases it is considered appropriate for the departed to be buried in their home village irrespective of how many years they had lived in town. Jadezweni told me it was for that reason that many migrants in Joe Slovo Park and other African townships belonged to savings clubs and funeral societies.

(Personal communication, February-April 2000)

#### **4.2. Life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement**

The residents of Marconi Beam Informal settlement established local social networks in order to cope with the challenges of life typical in informal settlement settings. However such local social networks were undermined by the frequent fire strikes that were so much apart of life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. A fire started in one shack quickly spread affecting many other adjacent shacks in the entire settlement. These shack fires were unpredictable, uncontrollable and very devastating. Often in their wake these shack fires left residents reeling with loss. These fires seriously hampered the ability of residents to acquire material belongings, and thus to consider themselves as successful, and to live a life of comfort. Some scholars working in African cities also observed the impermanence of success in the context of global capitalism. Thus Nyamnjoh (2001:31) wrote:

“...faced with the vicissitudes of, temporality or transience of personal success in the context of their modernities under global capitalism, even the most achieving and cosmopolitan or diasporic...hesitates to sever links with kin or tradition entirely. They strive instead to make their village community and customs part of their of their success and good fortunes in the world beyond,

so that in return the community can help them in times of individual failure and misfortune.”

With declining economies the poor in African urban centres had in the last few decades witnessed joblessness, a reduction in wages, worsening housing conditions. In these situations migrants have found it wise to sustain active links with kin in the rural areas, and have indeed turned to these social networks in times of need, whilst nurturing new social ties. By the same token, migrants also develop and nurture new networks in the cities.

One of the issues that had to be addressed relates to the accumulation of assets or property by migrants based in the cities. The vulnerability of makeshift housing to fires made it difficult for people to acquire household belongings. And as has been shown indeed those who acquired such belongings did lose them in the Marconi Beam home fires. Given the situation, migrants elected to limit the number of their household belongings to an absolute minimum, whilst saving money in bank accounts. Those migrants who acquired material belongings repatriated such goods to the rural areas where they could be kept safely.

The goods repatriated to the countryside varied. There are migrants who choose to save as much as it was humanly possible with the view to retiring in the rural areas where they hoped to ultimately share their wealth with their rural kin. In a country like South Africa, where state social security is inadequate, personal savings can be an important source of support in the period of one's old age. A limitation to migrants' propensity to save money is that many earn modest incomes.



A classic way by which migrants invest in their rural homestead is by means of buying livestock in the rural areas, and these are left in the care of rural kin. In addition to buying livestock, Jadezweni also purchased a tractor worth R42 000 00. With that tractor, Jadezweni's father ploughed the household's fields as well as those of his neighbours. Jadezweni's father charged his neighbours and villagers a small fee for his services. The income earned from ploughing the fields was often used to acquire basic necessities such as tea, bread, washing powder, bath soaps etc.

Jadezweni's biography suggests that there are migrants whose economic position allows them to remit considerably to their rural homesteads, and thus contribute significantly to the long-term social security of rural households. It must be noted that many migrants in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were not as fortunate as Jadezweni was. Likewise, their remittances to their rural kin were minimal. Thus many of the migrants could only afford sending small remittances on an irregular basis.

The fortunate few like Jadezweni were in a position build assets in their rural homes, and these assets are left in the care of his father. A question that can be raised is whether such assets belonged to Jadezweni personally or were seen as the collective wealth of the household. This question can be addressed by investigating why migrants leave their rural homesteads in order to come to town. Migrants come to town in order to find work and earn money for themselves and their rural homesteads. No wonder then that assets accumulated in town are preferably repatriated to their rural homesteads.

Irrespective of the fact that most migrants spend most parts of their prime age in the cities, they continue to see themselves as belonging elsewhere, in the rural homestead. Migrants' narratives suggest that the urban household is often seen as an appendage of the rural homestead. Jadezweni, for instance kept photographs of his rural homestead, and often spoke nostalgically about the tranquillity of rural life, and the superiority of rural community values.

Jadezweni's biography enables us to consider the status of the migrants' urban households in relation to the migrants' homesteads of origin. In the migrants' scheme of things, the urban household is seen as an appendage of the rural homestead. For that reason any eventuality that besets a migrant and hinders his or her economic activities also undermines the social and economic well being of his rural homestead. It was because of the economic interconnectedness of the rural and the urban households that in cases of disasters and misfortunes of various kinds (shack fires, flooding, financial need etc.) that Jadezweni was able to secure finances from his father to rebuild both his urban home and business. An analysis of Jadezweni's social support network suggests that despite being in urban places, migrants continue to be embedded in networks of economic exchange with their rural kin.

The economic obligations between urban and rural households can help explain the remittance pattern between urban migrants and their rural homesteads. For example, in times of economic boom Jadezweni augmented his remittances to his father's homestead. Similarly, as seen earlier he received significant support during times of need. Underlying the migrants' remittance behaviour is the philosophy that a



migrant ventures into the distant cities in order to provide generously to the rural homestead wherein various categories of extended kin live (Moodie, 1991).

A person who is able to provide generously to his rural homestead is regarded as "*indoda yamanyane*" (a genuine man). The ability to remit materially to the rural homestead is the one primary criterion by which the success of a migrant is judged. However successful in material and financial terms a migrant can be, if he is unable to share his wealth with kin in the rural areas, then such success is not recognised. Often those who for whatever reason stop remitting to rural homestead also stop visiting. Thus in isiXhosa, the mother tongue of the majority of migrants of the Eastern Cape Province one who absconds to town and stops remitting and visiting his rural community is called an *itshipa*.

An *itshipa* is someone who for all practical purposes has broken his connections with his rural homestead and community. Similarly an *itshipa* looks neither to kin nor village mates as role models. Unlike other migrants an *itshipa* belongs to social circles other than those of his kin or village mates. Similarly in times of leisure and need an *itshipa* turns neither to his urban extended kin nor to fellow village mates. Absconders are people who have social networks with their community of origin, and for that reason they are resented.

Isixhosa-speaking rural communities have ambivalent attitudes towards migrant labour. On the one hand, migrants consider rural areas as their homes. Yet migrant labour takes the able-bodied away from their rural homesteads to the cities. Arriving in the cities migrants are exposed to an urban industrial lifestyle. However it has

become necessary for members of rural communities to leave their homes to earn money, assist in the building of the homestead (McAllister, 2001).

Notwithstanding the need to participate in a modern capitalist economy, migrants resist full incorporation into a modern industrial society. This resistance to incorporation into an urban society occurs through ritual. There are rituals that migrants perform before they depart for the cities. One such ritual is known in isiXhosa language as *ukuncula* (invocation). The *ukuncula* ritual serves to inform the ancestors about a person's intention to leave the rural home to look for work in the city. It is hoped that the ancestors will accompany and protect the prospective migrant in his journey. A day before the migrant departs to the city African beer is brewed. The *ukuncula* ritual involves a select number of people. Although beer and food accompanies this rituals these are given in small quantities. This ritual is observed a day before a person departs for the city (McAllister, 1980, 213).

Similarly, there are rituals that migrants perform when they return to their rural community from the city. One of the rituals performed when migrants return home is called *umsindleko* (the provision). The *umsindleko* ritual involves many people, and food and beer is served. The *umsindleko* ritual is performed in order to mark the safe and successful return of a migrant from the city. This ritual is performed especially after a long period of absence from home. Different persons tend to execute it at different times during their lifetime. For example, whereas there are migrants who perform this ritual at the time of the migrant's first return from the city, other persons do not perform this ritual until the latter years of their migrant careers (McAllister, 1980, 225).



The vicissitudes of life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement and other similar neighbourhoods only help to reinforce a negative view of cities amongst migrants. Despite the lack of economic opportunities typical in many rural communities, the tranquillity that reigns in such areas, the entrenched system of traditional leadership through which land for subsistence and residential purposes continues to be allocated, bestows a sense of social, political and economic security that is hard to find in the cities. These structural factors give rise to the perception that the rural community and its values are superior to their urban counterparts.

Migrants in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement continued to retain their cultural ties with their rural homesteads and communities in general. Thus many migrants in many cities are buried in their rural areas of origin rather than in Cape Town where they work. The practice of burying the dead in their rural areas of origin is a manifestation of the cultural significance attached to the rural areas.

Thus in Cape Town and other South African cities rural migrants belong to burial societies. These burial societies assist members financially and materially in instances of the death of a loved one. Subscription fees vary from one society to another and the actual aspects of burial that are covered. Some burial societies cover coffin and mortuary costs, whilst other such societies may cover mortuary costs, provide tents and chairs for the night vigil, and transportation costs for the deceased to the rural areas.

Depending on the circumstances some people are able to simultaneously belong to several burial societies so long as they can keep up with monthly payments. Whereas there are burial societies to which membership is open to everyone who is able to keep with monthly contributions, other such groups are open to kin only. In the case of the latter, only people who are related to each other by descent can subscribe.

Furthermore burial societies are often not localised, including as members individuals living in various parts of the country. Thus in the case of the death of one of Jadezwi's kin, others (kin) based in Cape Town made funeral arrangements. These members were to co-ordinate their arrangements with those that were taking place in various other places including Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and the deceased's village of origin. Migrants therefore, irrespective of the years they spend in the city continue keep ties with their rural areas. These ties are both cultural and economic, sustained through kin and village mate networks.

The practice of burying migrants in their rural areas of origin is also not unique to South Africa, but exists in various parts of the African continent. Anderson (2001) suggests on the basis of a study conducted in Zimbabwe that scholars must move away from viewing the rural and urban areas as being tied by instrumental considerations. Anderson suggests that except for political and economic interests, migrants in cities also have their own cultural dispositions. This drive to belong somewhere culturally is so significant that in regions such as West Africa, even urbanites with no actual rural ties, can depending on their ethnic origin, claim certain



rural villages as places of their origin, and therefore as places where they must be buried (Nyamnjoh, 2001; Gugler & Geschiere, 1998, Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 1998).

Kin networks are often selective in both function and membership. Therefore certain kin networks can be activated for certain aspects of life. Accordingly, Jadezweni knew that in times of a fire disaster he could not turn to his brothers or uncle who were in Cape Town, but he relied on his father who was based in rural Eastern Cape. This is because Jadezweni and his father were like business partners. Jadezweni was the only one amongst his brothers who remitted regularly and it was on that basis that his father always assisted him. Yet at the occasion of making funeral arrangements for one of Jadezweni's kin who had died in Johannesburg there were other kin who were not regular members of Jadezweni's network who suddenly played a role.

Kin networks are also not static in their boundaries or membership. An individual who is a member of a kin network can be dropped or assistance to him can be terminated if that person is unable to reciprocate. By the same token a person who may have not been part of a kin network may decide to join such a kin network. Joining a kin network however is not something that one does formally, but one becomes a member by entering into exchanging goods and services with other network members.

#### **4.3. Rural to Urban Migration**

Migrant labour had economic and political uses for the authorities in both in the colonial and apartheid eras. On the other hand, the migrants themselves formulated their own ideas and practices in order to counter those of the state. In order to

facilitate rural to urban migration, migrants in the cities often exchanged information about availability of jobs and general housing conditions. This information was important for it enabled those left behind to formulate a picture of what to expect when they themselves migrated to the urban centres. As Jadezweni's case demonstrates, his uncle sponsored his migration to the city. It was Jadezweni's uncle who took responsibility for providing him with shelter and food during Jadezweni's initial days in town. In such circumstances the expectation is often that as soon as the new migrant secures employment they should start contributing towards the costs of their lodging and food.

Moreover, once a migrant earns an income they can decide to continue living with their original hosts or to settle independently. Kin and home village networks therefore perform a social and economic role by cushioning migrants against the hardships imposed by structural factors. This fact was also reported by in the earlier studies conducted amongst isiXhosa-speaking migrants in East London (Reader, 1955; Mayer, 1971).

The tendency to exchange information of economic importance is not peculiar to migrants in the Cape Town. Walsh & Simonelli (1986) observed that migrant workers in the oil producing areas of Oklahoma kept contact with their kin and friends in other parts of the United States. The authors also found that those migrants who had already secured employment also lured other people from their home towns to come and work in the area. They did so by writing to their home towns or telephoning there, informing those they had left behind about housing and working conditions. In



the next section I will consider the role of neighbourhood networks in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

#### **4.4. Interactions between Neighbours**

In the isiXhosa language the term *abamelwane* is used to refer to neighbours. This word is derived from the phrase “ukuma” literally meaning to stand. People regard each other as neighbours if their homes are built near to one another. On the other hand geographic proximity is contrasted to social distance in that neighbours are also referred to as *abantu bangaphandle* literally translated as “people of the outside”. The notion of people of the outside is used to distinguish neighbours from kin. Despite the distinction drawn between kin and neighbours, residents it is considered desirable to have healthy relations with one’s neighbours. And of course there are many cases in which neighbours are also related by descent. This fact applies both in the countryside as well as in the city. In the next paragraph I will focus on the interactions between neighbours in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

Often pioneer residents of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement helped their kin, village mates, work mates, and friends to settle on the site. Furthermore it was common for newly arrived migrants to establish their own dwellings, usually near the dwellings of their kin, village mates or workmates. Thus I found that villages like Tsolo, Tsomo, Cala, and Engcobo, were well represented in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. Almost every person from these villages knew someone within Marconi Beam informal Settlement or some part of Cape Town who came from the same village as themselves.

The tendency of residents to cluster in certain spaces on grounds of kinship, language, home village ties served both cultural and material purposes. At a cultural level this practice enabled migrants to live near those people with whom they shared cultural norms and values. Migrants' cultural values were thus perpetuated in the urban situation. Furthermore by clustering in certain urban spaces of people were able to devise culturally specific ways of coping with the everyday challenges imposed by the dominant society. Given common social and economic experiences and sharing of the same neighbourhood residents could exchange services.

Residents' social networks were however, not limited by language, kinship and village of origin. It was not uncommon for people to belong to networks in which things like home village ties or kinship counted little. For an example many women who originated in different towns or rural areas, who spoke different languages, belonged to very active social networks in which money, food, childcare services and the likes were often exchanged. In order to justify the existence of these social networks African cultural values were often evoked and expressed in such proverbs as *umntutu ngumntu ngabanye abantu* (a human being is what he is because of others).

In Marconi Beam Informal Settlement residents belonged to social networks because they were needy. And because of this situation of want amongst residents someone who received a favour from a neighbour was often under pressure to return it as soon as it was humanly possible. Whereas it was common for residents to turn to their neighbours in times of need, the recipients of assistance knew that their donors were waiting to see whether or not a favour was returned. If one failed on a few occasions



to return favours, such a person was dropped from the network. This did not happen formally. If people had dropped one of their residents from their network they simply declined to assist the person at the time of need.

Finally, the networks that neighbours formed with each other were instrumental in transmitting small quantities of goods. The goods often exchanged included food, fuel, candles and the likes. Through such networks residents who had insufficient financial resources were able to tap into their social relationships in order to surmount their financial limitations.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the uses of social networks amongst migrants. Using this study as a basis, I have shown firstly that migrants who move to the cities retain their social networks with their home areas as well as establishing new ties in the destination areas. Through kin and home village networks information of economic value is transmitted between the urban and the rural areas. Furthermore, I showed that in their initial stages of migration to the urban areas poor migrants often depend on social networks of kin and village mates for cultural and economic adjustment.

Secondly, this chapter has shown that the flow of informal support follows the pattern of a two-way street, that is to say resources flow from the urban areas to the rural areas as well as from the rural areas to the urban areas. Especially at the time during which migrants do not have resources of their own they receive support from village mates and kin who are already established in the city. However, there cases

in which migrants are able to draw on financial resources from the rural areas. Jadezweni's life history illustrates this point. It can therefore be argued that migrant networks are not limited to local areas but function across regions, provinces and between cities.

Thirdly, upon establishing themselves economically in the urban areas, migrants remit to their rural homesteads. Whilst the actual size and the regularity of sending these remittances depends on individual circumstances of migrants, it is regarded as proper to send huge investments in the form of money or material belongings to the rural homestead. Furthermore rural to urban remittances are utilised for daily necessities, but are also invested in subsistence and small-scale commercial agricultural activity. This practice of spending less in the urban area, and remitting more wealth to the rural homestead is premised on the thinking that the rural homestead is the place in which one lives and enjoys the fruits of his labour whilst the city is seen simply as a place in which wealth is sought.



## Chapter 5

### Household Structure in Joe Slovo Park<sup>6</sup>

#### 5. Introduction

In chapter four I discussed the factors that led to the Marconi Beam land invasion, the responses of the various stakeholders and most importantly the negotiations that followed with the view to resolving the dispute. I also discussed the political context within which these developments occurred. The most important outcome of the negotiations process was an agreement according to which the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was declared a “transit” camp. A site was designated for low cost housing in a new suburb called Joe Slovo Park.

The aim of this chapter is two fold. Firstly, I focus the discussion on the following aspects of the household: average household size and headship; and the various types of household found in Joe Slovo Park. The discussion will draw on the findings of a household survey conducted in the settlement in November of 2000 and on case histories of individuals collected during fieldwork. The case histories are meant to illustrate the factors influencing the recruitment and departure of individuals into households.

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<sup>6</sup> Joe Slovo Park is a multi-ethnic settlement, in which Coloureds, Africans from South Africa and beyond live. However the isiXhosa speaking migrants are in the majority. As if to illustrate the dominance of isiXhosa speakers, on one occasion an informant told me that Joe Slovo Park is a place that was started by “red” people. Coloured Afrikaans-speakers of this settlement told me that they were jeered at whenever they attempted expressing their views at community meetings. However during interviews isiXhosa residents of urban origin also expressed a similar concern, namely that their rural counterparts were dominant in public matters. In my view the most marginalized group of residents is that constituted by West Africans. They are foreigners; living in rented accommodation, speak little English and almost no local languages at all. For these reasons their participation in matters of public interest is curtailed.

### 5.1. Household Size

Firstly, the household survey I conducted in Joe Slovo Park found that the average household size was 4.38. Secondly, 74% of the households were male headed, whilst the remaining 26% were female headed. Thirdly, the average age of the household head was 39.2. In the next section I present two tables, the first of these contains findings on the distribution of household sizes. The second table contains findings concerning household structure in Joe Slovo Park.

**Table 1: Distribution of Household Sizes: November 2000**

Household Size	Number of Households	Percentages
1	4	8
2	3	6
3	8	16
4	12	24
5	11	22
6	4	10
7	4	8
8	8	4
9	0	0
10	1	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

A recent study conducted in the Cape Town Metropolitan Area suggests that average household size in informal settlements was 4.43 (Cross & Bekker, 1999). Another study conducted in Monwabisi Park (an informal settlement in Khayelitsha) suggests that average household size in this local area was 3.38 (Sharp, et al 1999). A similar study conducted in Thembaletu Township, in George (the capital of the Southern Cape) found that average household size was 4.06 (Data Desk, 1999). One of the striking features regarding areas of low cost housing and informal settlements that



came into being after the apartheid era is that household size in such areas is small when compared to the older African formal townships. In the next table I will present findings regarding household types in Joe Slovo Park in November 2000.

**Table 2: Distribution of Household Types**

Household Type	Number of Households	Percentage
Households consisting of extended kin	42	84
Nuclear households	3	6
Single person households	4	8
Households containing non-kin only	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

In the next section I will discuss the above-mentioned household types in detail in an attempt to explain the existence of these household types on the basis of subjectively held ideas.

## **5.2. Extended Households**

First time migrants who arrive in Cape Town from the rural areas head for the homes of their kin and village mates. These migrants provided with meals and shelter at no financial cost for so long as they are unemployed. In exchange for food and shelter the unemployed usually assist with duties around the house. Social norms prescribe that duties be segregated according to gender. Usually men perform duties such as gardening, fixing roofs, floors, doors, erecting fences and other similar responsibilities.

Women, on the other hand, assist with duties such as cooking, cleaning, the care of children, and the general upkeep of the house. In some instances after arriving in town some of the women move in with lovers, living with them as though they were husband and wife. This practice is known as *ukuhlalisana* (literally meaning living together). Marriage is rare in most of these relationships and the children that are born in such contacts are usually repatriated to the countryside where they are brought up by the parents of the female partner.

#### **Case no 2: Mpande Comes to Town**

**Mpande is twenty-six years of age, and arrived in Milnerton in 1989, through the assistance of his brother Vukani. Following the land invasion both Vukani and Mpande constructed two dwellings in close proximity to one another. In 1997 Vukani got a house in Joe Slovo Park and Mpande moved in with him. On arrival, Mpande constructed an informal dwelling next to the main house. Mpande used this dwelling as a bedroom. The two brothers bought groceries collectively, and cooked together. In 1998 Vukani, Mpande's brother invited his wife and two children who until then were in the Eastern Cape rural areas to join him in Joe Slovo. Mpande's sister-in-law took over the domestic duties including cooking meals, cleaning the home and doing the laundry. From time to time Mpande and Vukani send gifts to their parents in the rural areas.**

(Personal communication, June, 2000)

A study conducted in East London (Reader, 1961:141-2) suggests that in the 1960s newly arriving migrants found accommodation with their age-mates, (*iintanga*), usually from the same village or rural district. The author suggests that young



migrants avoided staying with their elder brothers because they had the desire to experience town life without the interference of senior kin. Room sharing was characterised by hierarchical relations, with the “owner” enjoying immense powers over his colleagues. I must, however, indicate that Joe Slovo Park is in many ways different to the East London of the 1960s.

A fundamental difference resulting from the political changes is that today residents can let or sub-let to tenants since they own property. The stringent cultural norms that regulated relations between individuals in the 1960s then have since given way to more liberal values. The change in values was encouraged by the relative ease with which migrants today can find accommodation in the city, compared to the situation in the 1960s. If a home owner is perceived as being too authoritarian and exploitative there is much more scope for the tenant to seek alternative accommodation. Jeff (personal communication, February, 2000) illustrated this point in this manner:

“Previously I lived with my father’s brother’s son. Although the two of us got on well, he was a drunkard. Therefore, he spent most of his money on drinking. As a result, the money he brought home was little. He always expected me to buy food. We quarrelled a lot about his drinking habit.”

If a kin member secures employment, then they are expected to make financial contributions to the household. Although the exact amount of one’s contribution is rarely stipulated, one is expected to give what they consider to be fair. The question of contributions is the cause of many conflicts within households. Although a

household may have several income earners, it is rare to find cases in which everyone contributes their fair share to their households. This is however not a phenomenon that is peculiar to Joe Slovo Park. Yose (1999) also reported on exploitative relations between landlords and tenants.

The Joe Slovo Park houses are small covering a total surface area of 20m<sup>2</sup>. This is a cause for great dissatisfaction amongst residents. As a critical comment on the size of their formal houses residents use terms such as "*ltyotyomba*" and "*uvez'inyao*" to refer to their homes. The former is an isiXhosa word with (with derogatory implications) used to refer to makeshift housing. The latter is an Nguni phrase and can literally be translated as meaning that the government houses are so small that the legs of the occupants who sit inside can be seen protruding on the outside. Yet it is difficult to deny that the low cost public housing is superior in quality compared to the makeshift housing built by residents in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

In order to accommodate rural kin arriving to look for jobs residents are compelled to build additional dwellings on their properties. There are three ways in which these dwellings can be built. Firstly, a proprietor can buy building material and hire a local "builder" to erect the dwelling informally. Since the cost of building is not fixed the builder and the proprietor usually negotiate the price informally. Often residents pay builders in instalments. This is an indication that for the average Joe Slovo Park resident adding an informal dwelling to a house is costly.

Secondly, a proprietor can buy building material and utilise household labour for erecting the dwelling. In that case the proprietor is able to save on labour costs.



Thirdly, a proprietor can organise a group consisting of kin, neighbours and friends to assist in the erection of the dwelling. These persons are usually not paid monetarily but the hosts provide food and refreshments. Neighbours and friends justify their participation in such activities by saying “umntungumntu ngabanye abantu” (a person is a person because of other people). In addition to altruism residents assist their neighbours so that they too can draw on their neighbours’ assistance should the need arise in the future.

A question that can be asked is whether this cooperation between kin, neighbours and friends is similar to work parties that are found in the rural areas (*amalima*). On all occasions during which I witnessed cooperative labour in Joe Slovo Park, neither the household heads nor the other participants referred to the people who had gathered to assist in the building of dwellings as a work party. To me this suggests that the cooperative labour groups I encountered in Joe Slovo Park did not constitute work parties as one finds in the rural Eastern Cape.

What purposes then does cooperation between neighbours and friends serve? By participating in communal activities the unemployed showcase their skills and general worth to the community. These activities also present an opportunity for residents to intermingle with one another, to create new friendships, to strengthen old ones and to show solidarity towards each other as members of the same community.

Yet not everybody in Joe Slovo Park has the means to add buildings to their homes in order to accommodate extended kin. And in such cases should kin expect to be

hosted they can constitute a potential threat to the stability of conjugal relationships. In the next section I present the full details of this case history as a demonstration.

### **Case 3: Membership in John's Household**

John is 45 years old. He started living in the Milnerton area in 1988 after taking employment at the Milnerton racecourse. Later on he left the racecourse to take a job with a construction company in Milnerton. In 1990 he took part in the Marconi Beam land invasion, with the result that he too qualified for a house in 1996. At the time he started living in Joe Slovo Park his household consisted of four persons, namely John himself, his wife Vanessa and their two children. A year later, John's third child was born, thus increasing household membership to five persons. John was the only person who was earning a cash income from formal employment. In 1997, John's mother-in-law came to live with them, thus increasing household membership to six persons. John's mother-in-law was about 69, and on an old age pension. She too contributed financially towards food from her old age pension. A few months afterwards Emily, John's pregnant sister-in-law also joined the household increasing household membership to seven. When Emily's daughter was born John's household membership increased to eight persons. Emily was unemployed and did not receive any material support from her baby's father. One day when I went to see John for an interview his wife said that he had started coming home erratically. According to Vanessa, John slept over at work to save on transport costs. Yet there were rumours that John was coming home erratically because he was involved with another woman in Delft (another township in Cape Town). At another time when I passed by to greet them on



**the way to another household I was fortunate to find John at home. He offered to accompany me to my destination. As we walked on he told me that the reason he was not coming home regularly was to save on his transport costs. Secondly, John also indicated that it was better for him to stay over at work than come back to a home packed with in-laws.**

(Personal communication, February-May 2000)

We have seen that the sharing of shelter can be an inconvenience for both house owner and lodger alike. In the next section I discuss the situation relating to single person-households.

### **5.3. Single-Person Households**

Migrants generally hold the view that they came to town to find work and earn money in order to build their rural homesteads. The thinking of single person householders regarding money and material objects is reflected in their expenditure patterns. They avoid spending money on expensive furniture, home improvements, clothes, city women, and other such luxuries.

During fieldwork I visited one such household. I saw the following: In the bedroom there was a bed, and a small radio placed on a chair. There was no wardrobe and clothes were hung on a rope stretched diagonally in one corner of the room. In the open plan area I saw a table, on top of which stood a double plate electric stove. There was also a small, but old cupboard for tableware (knives, forks, teaspoons, pots, dishes etc.). After indicating the motive of my visit the householder went into the bedroom, fetched the chair, and put the radio on the floor and then came to listen

to what I had to say. This is indicative of the point made earlier that those who live alone do so in order to minimise costs of their daily subsistence. Migrants also try and avoid expensive recreation activities. They justify their position by claiming recreation is *“izinto zabantwana”* (children's things). Underpinning this orientation towards urban life is the notion that migrants are economic sojourners in Cape Town whose “genuine” homes are in the rural areas. Tshawe, a migrant (personal communication, August, 2000) said,

“We came to Cape Town in order to work, not to live here. We have our homes with our wives and children back in countryside. They rear our sheep and goats, and plough the land. From the very beginning we lived in un-partitioned male only hostels. From there we lived in squatter camps. Now I have a house but I live alone. This is no place to build a family. You see here in town you buy everything. In the countryside you can buy sugar, salt and a few things, but you plough the land, and get food from it. You see in the town everything is money and if you do not have it you must eat from the rubbish bin.”

How is it possible for African migrants who were at the receiving end of the apartheid system to believe in a narrative that was used to justify their oppression? In answering the above question one must consider the gender, age, and career of the informant at the time of the interview. The informant in question was male, in his late fifties, nearing retirement. Before moving to Cape Town the informant had worked in Johannesburg and Rustenburg, and had had experience living in single sex migrant hostels.



This suggests that the informant's migrant career started at a time when the state discouraged the permanent urbanisation of the African population. This goal was achieved by limiting housing stock to the African population, discouraging them from ownership of any businesses, and through the enforcement of the pass laws. In these circumstances any money saved would have been remitted to the rural areas in order to support his wife and children who were prevented by law to be in the city.

Furthermore, whatever money left after buying basic goods was invested in agricultural activity, especially livestock and ploughing. Migrants who have accumulated valuable assets in the rural areas perceive the countryside as their homes. Their desire to return there is partly motivated by the resources they have invested there. But they migrants also retire in the rural areas in order to spend the last days of their lives with their spouses, children and other extended kin.

Younger migrants who arrived in Cape Town in the 1990s tell a different story to that told by old-generation migrants. Although the youth come to the city with the view to finding employment they are also attracted by the superior social infrastructure of the city. According to one study the provision of social infrastructure is one of the factors attracting migrants to the city of Cape Town. By the same token remittances and visits to the rural areas are in decline (Bekker, 2001). Even those migrants who wish to return home regularly are prevented to do so by the demands of the formal labour market.

Following the publication of James Ferguson's book namely "Expectations of Modernity" (1999), one may ask whether the social networks of urban migrants will remain resilient in the era of globalisation. Anthropological studies conducted in Cape Town suggest that the poor cope with their economic condition by changing household membership and blurring the boundaries between different households. This has come to be known as domestic fluidity.

The single person household is particularly vulnerable to change of membership. A person who starts by living alone may, for example, decide later to take an additional person (preferably a kin member). Changes in household structure can happen as a response to the economic situation or out of a desire for companionship. In the next section I provide case study on the Ntombifuthi household as an illustration of the above point.

#### **Case no 4: members of Ntombifuthi's household**

Ntombifuthi is 53 years of age and lives with Lindiwe her daughter who is 28 years old. Lindiwe has a daughter named Kwanele who is 9 years old. Prior to coming to Joe Slovo Park Lindiwe lived with her daughter in Khayelitsha, and Ntombifuthi lived alone in her house. However, Lindiwe decided to move from Khayelitsha to be with her mother in Joe Slovo Park. She occupies an informal dwelling at the back of the main house. The dwelling, which Lindiwe occupies, used to be rented out to someone who has since left for the Eastern Cape. Ntombifuthi and Lindiwe are employed as domestic workers in Table View and Kwanele goes to a primary school in Maitland. Since Ntombifuthi was not



**working on that day she was busy preparing meals for Kwanele who was due to arrive from school.**

(Personal communication, October, 2000)

Some migrants believe that Cape Town is in the grip of moral degeneration. These migrants also believe that even children who had had a decent upbringing in the rural areas may come under the negative influences of friends in the city of Cape Town. Migrants who hold this view try to protect their children from the negative city influences by leaving them in the countryside where they are brought up by grandparents. The rural landscape is perceived as the source of isiXhosa culture and morality. And the elderly are regarded as the custodians of those cultural moral values. The saying goes in Joe Slovo Park that children who grow up in the rural areas are well bred (*baqeqeshekile*). This view was partly expressed in the following case history.

#### **Case 5: Muziyanda in Cape Town**

**Muziyanda is 20 years old and comes from Cala. He lives with Majola, a fellow village mate in his 40s. In 1997 when Majola got his house he lived alone whilst his wife and children were in the Eastern Cape. This was so because Majola believed Cape Town was not a proper place to raise a family. It would seem Majola's wife held a different opinion on the matter for one day in 1999 when she (Majola's wife) came to visit him in Joe Slovo Park she refused to return to the countryside. From that day onwards Majola lived with his wife and two of his younger children in Cape Town. However, Majola's elder son remained in the countryside with his grandparents. Majola intends bringing his son to**

**Cape Town once he has finished school, and gone through initiation. Majola sponsored Muziyanda's trip to Cape Town, and supported him during the period of his unemployment. Majola says he regards Muziyanda as his own brother because Muziyanda's father was very good to the Majolas back in the Eastern Cape Province. Muziyanda addresses Majola as "ubuti" (brother), and Majola's wife as "usisi" (sister). In turn, Majola's children refer to Muziyanda as "ubuti". After securing employment, Muziyanda built an informal dwelling next to the main house, but does not pay rent or water. Muziyanda continues to share meals with the Majola family and makes a financial contribution towards food. However, Muziyanda is responsible for his laundry and the cleaning of his own dwelling.**

(Personal communication, March 2000)

Mayer (1957) encountered a similar orientation amongst the isiXhosa-speaking migrants of East London, whilst Moodie (1999, 1991) encountered a similar attitude amongst miners in Johannesburg. The former characterised this cultural orientation as a resistance to urbanisation whilst the latter referred to it as a resistance to proletarianisation. As is now common knowledge the view that urbanisation eroded laudable African cultural values was used by the apartheid regime to justify racist urban policies. Why then would Africans who have suffered under the system of apartheid believe the same narrative? In order to answer this question one must investigate the housing conditions pertaining to the urban African population, in South Africa cities, including Cape Town.



In a recent book titled "A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town" Mamphela Ramphele (1993) documented the living conditions of migrant workers in the city of Cape Town. According to the author every registered tenant rents a bed space, and such a person is referred to as a bed-holder. Bed-holders (migrants) share their bed-space with kin of different genders and ages. The beds in migrant hostels are not simply for sleeping purposes, but are perceived by the various occupants as homes.

In February of 2003, whilst the write-up of this research report was underway I was to invited on a tour of the African townships of Cape Town. We visited many sites including self-help projects, art and craft centres, community halls, and new housing development projects. In one such case we visited a housing development initiative aimed at the conversion of migrant hostels into family units. We were told that building for the first phase of the project was completed. The second phase of the project was in progress. According to the residents the third phase of the project was also being planned. It is the latter housing development initiative I want to focus on, as it is relevant for our present purposes.

We asked some of the residents to allow us into some of the homes that were already completed. In our interaction with the residents we discovered with great discomfort that ten years after Ramphele's book appeared in print, migrant workers and their families continue to live in conditions of overcrowding. Men continue to share their bed-spaces with their wives, children and other members of their extended families. Some beds are designed for two mattresses, one below the other. Likewise we discovered that two "households" occupied such bed-spaces,

one on top the other below, as though the occupants were living in double-storey houses.

The problem regarding the shortage of housing for the African population is neither new nor peculiar to the city of Cape Town. In his book based on his first-hand experiences of living and working in Sophiatown, a racially mixed but predominantly African suburb of Johannesburg (demolished as result of apartheid policies) Trevor Huddleston (1956/1984:97) wrote,

“The overcrowded rooms of Sophiatown, wherein whole families must live and perform their human function as best as they may, do not make morality a very easy thing. The lack of opportunity for fulfilling his personality in any productive way does not make easy either, for a lad to escape the street-corner gang and the excitement of gambling. The endless, grey vista of an existence which is based on poverty is not the kind of outlook which helps to keep a boy or his girlfriend alive to ultimate standards of beauty, truth, and goodness.”

A study conducted in the city of East London on the history, living conditions, and demography of the African population (Reader, 1961: 136) reported that: firstly urban-born Africans had no legal rights to own land or housing. Consequently they rented housing from the municipality. Given the acute shortage of housing African tenants in turn constructed wood and iron shacks which they rented to rural migrants who were working in the city. Migrants who were the first to lodge in such wood and iron dwellings in turn sub-let their rooms to fellow migrant workers. Although these



wood and iron dwellings varied in size, some of them consisted of up to six rooms with up to seven sub-tenants living in one room.

Secondly, Reader (1961:140) observed that relations between room-tenants and the sub-tenants were hierarchical. These hierarchical relations were reflected in the allocation of sleeping-space, distribution of domestic duties, and the consumption of food. When it comes to the allocation of sleeping space the registered room-tenant slept alongside the wall often concealed from view, and protected by other bedfellows who were sleeping closer to the door. Moreover, sleeping space was allocated in such a way that the registered room-tenant's bed was placed next to the window so that he could have a fair view of the outside. The sub-tenant who slept closest to the door was the one who had joined the group the last.

The registered room-tenant also allocated domestic duties to other sub-tenants who took responsibility for the chores in turns. These domestic chores included sweeping of floors, washing dishes, drawing water, making tea for the room-tenant and cooking meals. In addition, however earlier meals could have been prepared they were not served until the registered room-tenant had arrived from work. Once the meals were served, the room-tenant was the first one to put his hand to the bowl of food after which the dish was passed around the room according to the order of residents' seniority. Seniority was determined by the year on which one was circumcised. The same principle was applied with regard to the communal consumption of beer, and smoking of tobacco.

The three studies cited above suggest that the shortage of housing stock for the urban African population is a problem that has existed for over forty years. The activist cleric Trevor Huddleston reports this problem in Johannesburg's Sophiatown; the anthropologist Reader reiterates the same story about East London's African population. Ramphele's book (cited above) suggests that as late as 1993 the problem of lack of housing for migrant worker families had worsened over the past few decades. The township tour that I undertook in February of 2003 confirmed that despite the government's housing development projects, migrant households continue to live under deplorable circumstances.

It is my view that these circumstances have denied African urban populations their right to individual and family privacy. The acute shortage of housing has damaged the institution of the African family by undermining adult authority and subjecting minors to circumstances that "assaulted their childhood (Jones, 1993). These urban conditions rendered it difficult for parents to act as effective custodians of African customary values. The weak economic position of migrant parents makes it difficult for them to assert themselves upon their children. It is in this context that concerns about moral degeneration must be understood. By keeping their children in the rural areas household heads attempt to protect them from the negative influences of urban living.

There are instances in which the repatriation of children to the countryside is motivated by economic rather than moral concerns. Hence single mothers who are unable to support themselves and their children repatriate the latter to the



countryside where they come under the care of grandparents. A single mother of 35 years (personal communication, April, 2000) said,

"It is better if I am alone as I work once a week. Sometimes when I do not have food in the house I just go to bed without cooking. But if I were living with the children I would be forced to cook everyday and if I had no food I would have to find it somehow."

On the other hand, rural parents with urban kin realise that educational facilities in Cape Town are of a superior quality than those provided anywhere in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Such Eastern Cape parents bring their children to Joe Slovo Park, and from there, kin assist them to find schools in Cape Town and its environs. As the above evidence suggests the social networks that bind both rural and urban households are both cultural and economic. Depending on individual circumstances of those involved, these networks are activated by either party on either side of the rural-urban divide. Help also flows in both directions and not only in the urban to rural direction as it is commonly believed.

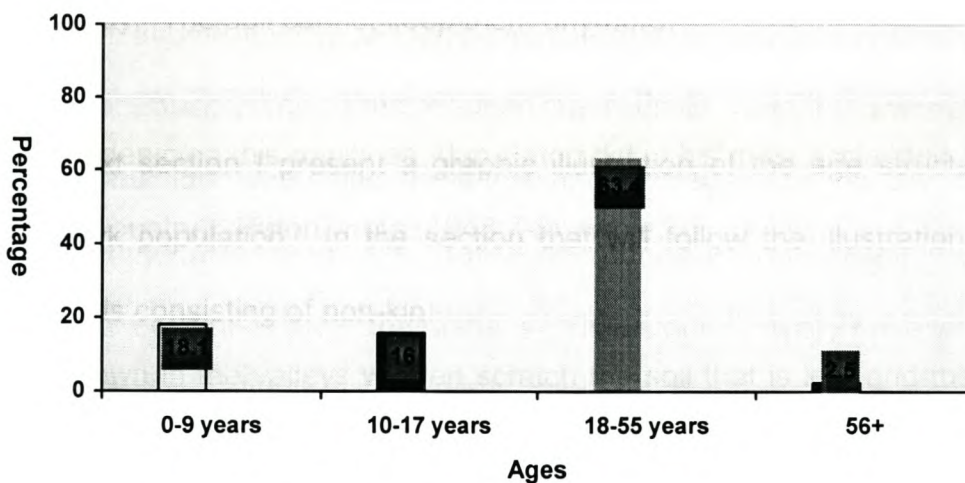
Rural populations have grown and the quality of the land has decline resulting in lesser agricultural yields. On the other hand public works programmes for housing road construction, water and sanitation have increased in the city of Cape Town. Consequently, rural to urban migration has continued relentlessly. The population structure of both cities and rural areas is thus distorted. Many have written about the impact of rural to urban migration on the population structure of the rural areas, but

few have depicted this reality as Alan Paton did in his most acclaimed novel, “Cry the Beloved Country”. Paton wrote (1948:7-8), wrote:

“Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them anymore.”

In the next section I present a graphic illustration of the age structure of the Joe Slovo Park population. In the section that will follow the illustration I will discuss households consisting of non-kin.

#### Age Structure of the Population



#### 5.4. Non-Kin Households

Some residents in Joe Slovo Park live in households in which there is non-kin. The owners of such houses usually rent their rooms to one or more people. Furthermore,



owners may live in the house itself or elsewhere usually in the countryside. These home owners either rented their homes to village mates or to strangers who were in need of accommodation. Such people had stopped visiting their rural homes and sending remittances to their rural homes. Whilst Joe Slovo Park has given some an opportunity to escape kin obligations, others see their houses as an opportunity to augment their cash incomes. In one such case one of the residents had built three rooms at the back of his property for rental purposes. This man claimed to have come from Welkom, to start a new life in Cape Town. This man shared his accommodation to three other men at the back of his house, yet he knew nothing about their origins or what they did for a living.

### **5.5. Conjugal Households**

Just like any other residential area, Joe Slovo Park has its share of conjugal households. What the case histories and the quantitative data suggest is that conjugal households are however a minority within Joe Slovo Park (see table 2). It is difficult for one to say whether or not the percentage of conjugal households will increase or decrease in the near future. Studies conducted amongst the poor suggest that household membership amongst the poor is continuously in flux (Spiegel, et al, 1996; Spiegel, et al, 1999, Ross, 1993). The focus of the next section will be on ideas about the physical environment, property, and the consumption of household goods. These ideas will be discussed through the aid of a case study.

#### **Case no 6: Mr. and Mrs. Stampu**

***Mr and Mrs. Stampu grew up in Graaff-Reinet. When I met the couple Mr Stampu was in his mid forties, had ten years of formal schooling and he was***

*worked as a machinist in the Montague Gardens Industrial Township. Mrs Stampu on the other hand was in her late thirties had eight years of schooling and was employed as a domestic worker in Table View. The Stampus said they had worked in Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg before moving to Cape Town. According to the husband, they came in search of a "better life". The wife added that they moved to Cape Town because they wanted "a change of lifestyle."*

*The couple lived on their own without children or members of extended kin. The couple said they had no friends in Joe Slovo Park but only neighbours who were very friendly. The couple's interactions with neighbours were also kept to a minimum. After the Stampus received their house, they demolished it, and built a new one on the site. The couple claimed the estimated market value of their new home was about R70 000. The house consisted of two bedrooms, an open plan area, a toilet and a bath. The kitchen had a double door fridge, a four plate electric powered stove, and a built in cupboards around the kitchen. The lounge area had a seven-piece dinning room set consisting of a table plus six chairs. According to the couple the majority of people in Joe Slovo Park came from the "Transkei". According to the Stampus, it was for that reason that many residents in Joe Slovo Park saw no reason to improve their homes, pay rates and taxes, or care for the environment.*

(Personal communication, October 2000)



The case study suggests that the Stampus have spent most parts of their lives in urban situations. Unlike many residents who believed that they were sojourners in Cape Town the Stampus perceived Joe Slovo Park and Cape Town as a place in which one can live permanently rather than as one onto which one was exiled by economic circumstances. The Stampus' strong identification with urban life was also reflected in their expenditure patterns.

As the case study suggests, the Stampus invested substantial finances in the rebuilding of their home, as well as in acquiring household belongings (furniture, appliances etc.). The Stampus believed in the upholding property values. Furthermore the Stampus believed that the physical environment had to be cared for. Likewise they were opposed to the development of informal housing in Joe Slovo Park. Moreover, this commitment to urban life also expressed itself in the Stampus' regular paying of rates, taxes and other municipal services. The above case study suggests that although the majority of the residents in Joe Slovo Park identified with the rural areas of origin, there is a negligible minority that identifies with the town living.

### **5.6. Urbanisation and Social Network Formation**

Yose (1999) writing on Marconi Beam reports on the prevalence of social networks through which residents exchange goods. These networks were also used to exchange services such as childcare and other domestic chores. These networks largely had women in the majority. The development of such social networks was aided by the collective use of such facilities as communal water taps, toilets, and so forth.

The relocation of residents in Joe Slovo Park destroyed the neighbourhood ties that were so much a part of life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. The formalisation of housing has decreased shack fires making it possible for residents to accumulate property. Joe Slovo Park residents are now expected to pay for services such as electricity and refuse removal. Residents who cannot pay for services are expected to make arrangements with the local authorities, as representatives of their households and not of the whole community.

Thus one of the consequences of housing formalisation is a rise in individualism. There are more residents who live alone when compared to those who share their dwellings with village mates. This is reflected in the findings of the household survey according to which only 2% of the household heads dwell with their village-mates. And those who host their village-mates charge a small fee as rental. This can be said to be the cultural consequence of the relocation from Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.

For these reasons, the older migrants tend to remember both Marconi Beam informal Settlement and the single sex hostels of the Milnerton racecourse with great nostalgia. Informants told me of the days gone by. They spoke passionately of the days when it was widespread for village-mates to sponsor each other's journey to town, to help each other find a job and to settle down. They remember with some nostalgia days during which certain rural districts and villages like Tsolo, Tsomo, Engcobo, and Cala were well represented in the migrant hostels of the Milnerton racecourse and the camaraderie of the days gone by.



## **5.7. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to discuss household structure in Joe Slovo Park. To that end, the various types of households were discussed, paying attention to the various categories of individuals who co-habited within households. I have shown for example that the extended household is the most common form of family organisation in Joe Slovo Park. There are both cultural economic and cultural reasons for this phenomenon. There is reason to believe that from a cultural point of view the extended family was, and continues to be, considered amongst isiXhosa-speaking residents as the appropriate way of ordering the family.

An investigation of the age structure reveals a high representation of people on the 18-55 age category, and a comparatively lower presence of persons aged 56 and over in Joe Slovo Park. This suggests that householders tend to recruit more youthful kin into their ranks so that the latter can also take advantage of employment opportunities existing within the Milnerton area and other parts of Cape Town. Therefore the predominance of the extended household compared to other households can be explained in both cultural and economic terms.

Another aspect relating to household structure concerns the continuing presence of single person households. Why do people who own houses live alone, without members of kin (either extended or immediate)? This phenomenon can be explained in terms of some subjectively held cultural views. There are residents who continue to view the city as a place to work, and the houses in it as providing temporary lodgings for the duration of their work.

For that reason such residents limit their expenditure in town to the bare necessities, and save or remit the bulk of their earnings to the rural homestead where they have spouses, children, and members of extended kin. Furthermore such migrants hold the view that the success of a migrant in town can only be measured in terms of his ability to provide adequately for those in the rural homestead. This cultural orientation towards the countryside can help explain the ideas, which some migrants have, about money, expenditures, and relationships with others in the urban context.

As we have already indicated the rural areas are held as places of Xhosa tradition and morality, and the city as place of moral degeneration. Some migrants who come to the city leave their children behind, or at some time repatriate them to the countryside. There they are made to remain until such time that they are ready to participate in the labour market, in which case they are then allowed to come to the city. Even then their sojourn to Cape Town is seen as a matter necessitated by the lack of economic opportunities in the countryside.

On the other hand, some urban households who experience hardship do shed membership by sending them to other places including the countryside where kin looks after them. This suggests ties of economic and cultural cooperation tie urban and rural households together. The habitual exchanges in persons between rural and urban households accounts for the fluctuations in the size and composition of households.



## **Chapter 6**

### **The use of Social Networks in the Labour Market**

#### **6. Introduction**

The importance of social networks in the process of rural to urban migration has been established in the previous chapters. I have also shown that in order to adapt successfully in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, individuals had had to establish social networks locally as well as with persons beyond the informal settlement. Household composition in Joe Slovo Park suggests that urban households continue to play an important role in linking members of their rural areas to the city of Cape Town, by providing accommodation and assistance with job related information. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the use of social networks in the labour market among the residents of Joe Slovo Park, focusing on both the formal and the informal economy. Before doing so I discuss the geographic location of Joe Slovo Park in relation to places of employment.

#### **6.1. Geographical Setting of Joe Slovo Park**

Joe Slovo Park is situated alongside the Koeberg Road, and the Montague Gardens Industrial Township borders it to the east. The residents of Joe Slovo Park are within walking distance from this industrial township, which boasts a host of factories warehouses, filling stations and various other light industrial outlets. The Montague Gardens Industrial Township is experiencing growth. As one passes through there are advertisements for industrial property that is available for leasing. In addition plots are also sold or available for interested in buyers or those willing to rent. Within walking distance to the south of Joe Slovo Park along the N1 High way one finds

Ratanga Junction, a theme park that opened its doors about five years ago. The Ratanga Junction also provides some employment for some of the residents living in Joe Slovo Park. To the west of Joe Slovo Park in the suburb of Milnerton there is a string of fast food outlets, petrol filling stations, garages, libraries, clinics, supermarkets, liquor stores, second hand furniture shops, and other places that offer employment.

To the north west of Joe Slovo Park one finds the Milnerton racecourse, which has for a long time provided both employment and lodging to many a migrant arriving from the Eastern Cape Province. Although in recent years the racecourse did shed jobs, it still continues to be a source of employment for some people living in Joe Slovo Park and Du Noon. Along the Koeberg Road to the north of Joe Slovo Park is bordered by the Bloubergstrand, Tableview, and Bothasig. Further to the north there is the Killarney Industrial Township, which has the same type of factories and industrial outlets as the ones found in Montague Gardens.

Along the Koeberg Road to the south one finds two suburbs namely Ysterplaat and Rugby. The areas in and around Ysterplaat and Rugby have seen urban deterioration, so that municipal authorities have implemented an urban renewal programme. The Koeberg Road links Joe Slovo Park to the Cape Town Central Business District, which is situated about five kilometres away. Furthermore, there is a minibus taxi service operating along the Koeberg Road linking the settlements of Du Noon and Joe Slovo Park to the Cape Town city centre. The settlement of Joe Slovo Park is situated favourably in relation to places of economic activity. The residents of Joe Slovo Park are within walking distance from many places of



employment situated in the Blaauwberg municipality. Most of the low cost housing projects are built far from places of economic activity. For example two areas, namely Philippi and Khayelitsha, have benefited from government subsidised housing, yet these new residential areas are situated about thirty to thirty-five kilometres from the city centre. In the next section I discuss the employment situation in the Blaauwberg municipal area. I compare the employment situation in the Blaauwberg municipality to that of the Cape Metropolitan Area. In that section I also introduce the findings of my own survey with regard to the employment situation in Joe Slovo Park.

## **6.2.Comparing Employment Trends: between Blaauwberg Municipality and the Cape Metropolitan Area**

A study conducted by the Industrial and Scientific Research Council (CISR), and cited in Bekker, et al (2000), focuses on economic growth in the Blaauwberg Municipal Area. The study investigated economic trends between 1996 and 2000. The findings of that study were as follows: in the period 1996-2000 about 10 000 new jobs were created in the Blaauwberg municipality. The spread of these new jobs was as follows: about half (50%) the jobs were created in the office and retail sectors, a quarter (25%) in the areas of tourism, recreation and housing, and just over one tenth (10%) in the industrial sector.

A study was carried out in order to capture social and economic trends in the Blaauwberg Municipality, and to compare these to the Cape Metropolitan Area. According to the findings of that study general unemployment levels in the Blaauwberg Municipality stood at 15.7%. On the other hand unemployment figures in the Cape Town Metropolitan Area were estimated at 19.7%. This study also

disaggregated its findings regarding employment conditions according to race group. Unemployment levels for the African population group stood at 30% in the entire Blaauwberg Municipality. On the other hand unemployment figures amongst the African population group in the Cape Metropolitan Area stood at 37.7%. The study estimated that unemployment amongst the Coloured population living in the Blaauwberg Municipality to be at 22.5%, whilst these figures stood at 17.7% in the Cape Metropolitan Area. As far as the White population group is concerned unemployment stood at 5% in the Blaauwberg Municipality, whilst unemployment for Whites in the Cape Metropolitan Area was estimated at 4.1%. In addition to the above, according to the findings of a household survey I conducted in Joe Slovo Park between October and November of the year 2000, about 29% of persons in the economically active age (18-55) were at the time of the survey unemployed and looking for work.

### **6.3. Employment Levels in Joe Slovo Park**

As indicated above unemployment levels amongst economically active persons (ages 18-55) stood at 29% in Joe Slovo Park. Given the unemployment levels in Joe Slovo Park residents use their houses for both residential and commercial purposes. Walking through the streets of Joe Slovo Park one is struck by the number of advertisements stuck or painted on the walls of people's homes. Almost a third of the houses with advertisements do not have the merchandise they advertise. The reason for this is that there are too many sellers, and fewer buyers. Many sell fruits, vegetables, snacks, sweets, soft drinks, bread, beers, and so forth. My household survey found that of the total percentage of people in employment about 50.5% were in the informal sector, whilst the remaining 49.5% were in the formal sector. The next



section presents a table illustrating the various economic activities in which Joe Slovo Park residents were engaged at the time of the research. This table should be read as an indication of some of the common activities which migrants engaged in, for purposes of earning incomes.

**Table 3: Distribution of occupations in Joe Slovo Park**

Occupation	Actual number of Persons	Proportion of the Employed in %
<b>Hospitality sector</b>		
House wives	15	17.19
Childminders	1	1.73
Waitresses	1	1.73
Dishwashers	2	2.26
Cooks	2	2.3
<b>Retail sector</b>		
Shebeen owners	2	1.89
Petrol attendants	3	3.33
Store assistant/	1	1.14
<b>Skilled workers</b>		
Carpenters	1	1.14
Motor mechanics	1	1.14
Drivers	3	3.48
<b>Unskilled workers</b>		
Gardeners	5	5.90
Security guards	3	3.90
Labourers	20	22.55
Domestic workers	5	5.20
Grooms	8	8.97
Handymen	5	6.08
Old age pension	1	1.73
Other	9	10.352
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100<sup>7</sup></b>

<sup>7</sup> The total sum of the percentage figures is 99.46. This figure has been rounded off to 100.

The above list was generated from the household survey conducted in Joe Slovo Park. Notable about this list is the under-representation of skilled workers and the non-representation of persons doing professional work. In order to understand this state of affairs we have look the educational achievement of residents, a factor discussed in the next section.

#### **6.4. Levels of Educational Achievement**

One of the factors that can explain the concentration of Joe Slovo Park residents in unskilled work is their low level of formal education. According to the findings of the household survey I established the following: Firstly about 12.2% of persons in the economically active age were without formal schooling at all. About 8.2% had one to three years of schooling. Effectively Over 20% of the population has little or no literacy at all. For that reason their chances of entering skilled occupations are non-existent. Only 13.8% of residents had graduated from secondary school, and a further 1.6% of residents held a post-matric qualification.

The low levels of formal schooling in Joe Slovo and other similar settlements explain the high concentration of such residents in blue-collar jobs. One of challenges that the residents of Joe Slovo Park face is that they are unable to fill the type of jobs that are created in the Blaauwberg municipality, as they do not have the necessary skills. Thus the majority of the residents are unable to exploit the geographic advantage, which they have in relation to distance from places of employment.



The low levels of formal schooling amongst the residents of Joe Slovo Park compares with other migrant dominated residential areas. Thus a study conducted in Cape Town migrant hostels suggests comparable levels of literacy amongst residents (Ramphela 1993). In another context Mamdani (1996) also suggests that levels of schooling amongst migrant hostel dwellers was generally low compared to those of people living in formal townships in the Reef. The study by Mamdani provides no quantitative data to back its claim.

### **6.5. Social Networks and Employment**

Residents arriving fresh from the countryside rely on social connections for information about jobs, and where possible there are those that arrive in order to take up jobs that were reserved. This is testimony of the fact that economically important information continues to flow through personal networks. I turn to the next case study, and begin to address some of the limitations of accessing the labour market through personal networks.

#### **Case no 7: Duma from Idutywa**

***Duma was born in Idutywa in the Eastern Cape in 1961. After completing his Standard 1 (Grade 4) he remained in his father's house in order to herd livestock. After undergoing initiation in 1983 he came to Cape Town where his uncle helped him find employment as an unskilled worker with a construction company. In 1993 he left his job to take another position as petrol attendant at a filling station in Milnerton. Duma held that job for ten years. He established very good contacts with his customers who came to the filling station to buy petrol. Using his contacts Duma has managed to place many people in jobs.***

***Most of these jobs were in construction, and gardening. A majority of the people that benefited from Duma's connections were his kin, friends, and village mates.***

(Personal communication, March 2000)

**Case no 8: Ayanda and Thobile**

***Ayanda and Thobile are married and have a house in Joe Slovo Park. Ayanda is thirty-five years of age; her husband Thobile is thirty-eight years. The couple originates from a village in the Eastern Cape. They have two children, aged ten, and thirteen. Ayanda and her husband live with Lindiwe, Ayanda's sister in law and Dabeni, Thobile's father's brother's son. Ayanda's husband works for one of the transport companies in the nearby Killarney Gardens Industrial Township. Thobile also put in a good word with his employers on Dabeni's behalf and today they work together in the dispatch section. Furthermore, in order to improve the income earning potential of the household Ayanda also started running a shop from her house as of 1996. Since Ayanda's sister in law (Lindiwe) is unemployed, she assists with running the home business, and the rearing of children.***

(Personal communication, February 2000)

**Case no 9: How Trudy found her First Job**

***Trudy is employed as a domestic worker in Table View one of the middle class suburbs in the Blaauwberg Municipality. Trudy works three days a week, employed by two different families. She works two days for the one family and only a day for the other. Her duties include cleaning the house, washing and***



***ironing clothes as well as feeding the pets. She arrived in Cape Town in 1987 and was put into a job by her aunt (her father's brother's sister). Trudy has also assisted her own sister and a number of other village mates find jobs. According to her, employers prefer to take on a person who has been referred rather than a stranger. She says this is due to the high crime rate seen since the establishment of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement.***

(Personal communication, February-March 2000)

Throughout my fieldwork in Joe Slovo Park I collected case studies and work histories for both men and women of different ages. Obviously I could have inserted numerous such cases in this chapter. The case studies chosen therefore were selected to help the reader understand the world I encountered in Joe Slovo Park and to illustrate arguments made in the discussion. With a few exceptions, the case studies in this chapter suggest a number of interesting points. The first point is that most residents secured their first jobs through contacts or social networks created on the basis of common language, place of origin, kinship, and comparable levels of formal schooling.

In other words, upon arrival in Cape Town new migrants inserted themselves into networks of persons with whom they shared a number of characteristics. This suggests that rural migrants arriving in Cape Town were not being ushered into an impersonal city-world made of people with strange ideas, but that they were being encapsulated into social networks consisting of other like-minded persons with backgrounds similar to their own (Mayer, 1971).

As the case studies suggest, where possible these social networks were instrumentally utilised to launch the new members into economic activity. Firstly, that economically important information was transmitted through social networks. Kin often got the information first, and if someone had no kin to place in a job they would rather think of village-mates, and if it were the case that no village mates were interested then one would consider one's neighbour or town friend. This was captured by one of my informants (Personal communication, October, 2000) during fieldwork when he said,

"Work is hard to find. You must know someone otherwise you won't work. Even your neighbour will not help you. If there is a job somewhere, you will find that your neighbour can rather reserve that job for his own people who are back in the Transkei. Many people arrive here from the villages but soon afterwards you will hear that they are they are working, whilst you who has been in town longer remain unemployment. You can only find a job if assisted by your own people."

However this tendency to rely on kin and home village networks to find jobs had its own personal and structural consequences for residents. One Joe Slovo Park resident (Personal communication, October, 2000) said,

"You can take one of your people and put them in a job. When they are in, they make new friends, talk bad about you to their friends, and sometimes they will even want to make you look bad in the eyes of the employer. They will do so in order for the boss to like them."



Although placing someone in the same job as oneself was common, this practice had its negative side. Often it led to competition between kin or village mates, and thus threatened to damage long standing personal relationships. As a result there were a few residents who said that although they would help a kin member or a village mate find a job in Cape Town, they would prefer that such a person should not work in the same place as themselves. The reason was clearly that in the work situation it is easy for people to develop jealousy towards a fellow village or kin member, especially if one becomes more industrious than his own brother (kin). The likelihood of this happening would be higher especially in jobs with little security.

The second disadvantage of recruiting kin or village mates into jobs through social networks is more structural than personal. Experienced migrants themselves are concentrated in lowly paid unskilled jobs. For that reason the information they have relates to unskilled jobs. Likewise migrants have no access to information that pertains to the higher levels of the labour market. Thus the jobs that the newly arrived migrants occupied through the assistance of experienced kin and village mate networks were also of low status and poorly paid.

Thus by using social networks in order to help kin into job openings they helped sustain the status quo. For example isiXhosa-speaking males remained dominant in the area of unskilled jobs. Women remained locked in certain types of jobs such as vegetable and fruits hawking, domestic work, and child rearing. The unskilled workers tended to remain in their first job for a long time before shifting to another. Moreover, even when they did move, the unskilled hopped from one poorly paid job to another. With unemployment levels such as those obtaining in the year 2000, and

the influx of the rural poor into the cities, those holding unskilled positions had to hold onto their jobs whether or not they were satisfied.

Due to the poor wages that residents earned in the formal employment, some that were active in the mainstream economy also ventured into the informal sector. Most of the informal trading took place from people's homes. This move suggests it was difficult for the average resident to sustain a decent lifestyle from their formal sector wages. However, since the informal sector was near saturation point, with little variety in terms of the goods and services offered to the consumers, rewards were also meagre.

It was those residents who relied completely on informal trading who suffered from the stagnation in the informal economy. These petty traders stayed in the informal economy whilst simultaneously searching for openings in the formal labour market. And the tendency was to depart from the informal economy soon after securing formal employment.

Not everyone in Joe Slovo Park is illiterate or without formal schooling. Generally, the Coloured Afrikaans-speaking residents are better educated than their African isixhosa-speaking counterparts. For this reason Afrikaans speakers tended to be concentrated in such trades as welding, building, and plumbing, motor mechanics. Despite their skills these residents were usually employed on a temporary basis depending on the availability of work. The following case study will illustrate the situation.



**Case no 10: Johnson and Perry at Work**

*Johnson Majiet was born in Barrydale. He has been working at the Rondebosch golf course as a caddie. In the course of his life Johnson had taken a short course in building, and had taught himself carpentry by working as an assistant to one of his colleagues. When Johnson first arrived in Cape Town he lived with cousin in Mitchells-Plain. When the Marconi Beam land invasion occurred Johnson decided to move to Marconi Beam Informal Settlement where he hoped to become a home owner. Johnson is a carpenter, and a builder. Johnson and Perry met in Milnerton where they doing work. Since then the two have been working together. Although Johnson and Perry come from different provinces, they are both Coloured (ethnic background), and speak Afrikaans as a mother tongue. According to Johnson this is important because the two can also understand each other when they work. When Perry finds work he takes Johnson with him, and Johnson does the same. Johnson says that on many occasions his neighbours always blame him for not telling them when he knows about jobs. Johnson insists that whenever he is called to do a job he would rather take Perry with him than someone who is just neighbour.*

(Personal communication, February, 2000)

These skilled residents formed their own closed networks exchanging economically important information. The skilled in Joe Slovo Park constitute a closed network. Cohesion amongst members of this group is facilitated by the fact that they have rear skills in their residential area as well as sharing a common language, namely

Afrikaans. This is however not say that non-Afrikaans speakers are excluded from these networks purely on the grounds of language.

Since work was often hard to find, one's ability to secure employment in the future was determined by how well one performed in previous jobs. For that reason, persons who secure jobs considered it proper to recruit peers with whom they had previously completed work with relative success. This was a rational thing to do since if one did a job badly or failed to complete it, such news spread quickly throughout the social network of both potential employers and peers alike.

The competition for employment opportunities was more intense between residents and non-residents. For example, some residents complained that often the local municipality awarded public works projects to contractors who came outside Joe Slovo Park, ignoring to tap into the skills that exist within Joe Slovo Park. According to residents, projects that could have created employment in the community went to contractors who were based in Atlantis, a town situated about forty kilometres from Joe Slovo Park.

Furthermore, lines of division were sharply drawn between locals and African foreigners living in Joe Slovo Park. Whereas the former owned houses, the latter were renting accommodation. Most African immigrants in Joe Slovo Park were fleeing from Du Noon an area in which xenophobia had resulted in violent confrontations between locals and African immigrants. Locals in Joe Slovo Park accused foreigners of "stealing" jobs. However many of the residents could not, if challenged, substantiate their claims. Furthermore, in my experience immigrants



were self-employed as hairdressers and tailors. These were economic activities that local residents did not consider as profitable. However, I should mention that all my attempts to speak to African immigrants could not bare fruit as those I met flatly refused to answer my questions.

## **6.6. Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the significance of social networks in the process of job seeking amongst the residents of Joe Slovo Park. In answering that question, I took the following steps: I outlined the geographical location of Joe Slovo Park within the Blaauwberg Municipality. I also discussed the economic trends in the Blaauwberg Municipality, with particular reference to the estimated total number of jobs created over a four-year period, and the spread of these jobs in the different industrial sectors.

Secondly, I compared the employment situation in the Blaauwberg Municipality with that of the Cape Metropolitan Area and these figures were differentiated in terms of race. In that section the labour market situation in Joe Slovo Park was also discussed was focussing on levels of employment and unemployment, with reference to both the formal and the informal economy. The analysis has shown the following: Firstly, the greatest number of employment opportunities that were created in the Blaauwberg Municipality in the period 1996-2000 were skilled jobs. Of the total number of jobs created tourism and offices related jobs constituted three quarters of the total amount of new jobs. Jobs in the industrial sector constituted only one tenth of the total. Therefore, a majority of the jobs created in the Blaauwberg Municipality were out of reach of the residents of Joe Slovo Park. This is because the new jobs

created required the type of skills that which the residents of Joe Slovo Park did not have.

Given the continuing connection of residents to their rural homesteads, whenever openings occurred, residents tended to pass the information to their kin in the rural areas or to a village mate who in their rural community rather than to inform their neighbour who was just in need of employment. This happened because even after arriving in the city migrants continued to perceive themselves as members of their rural communities. This was particularly so especially in unskilled work.

Skilled workers also had their own networks. Often those residents with skills kept aloof from the majority of the residents who were without labour market skills. Skilled workers often shared job-related information amongst themselves, rather than sharing it with neighbours or fellow residents who were unskilled. In other words the small minority of skilled residents in Joe Slovo Park also belonged to job-related networks, and membership in such networks was not necessarily determined by village ties but by skill and reputation. Job-related information flowed through these networks. The existence of job-related networks tended to entrench the fragmentation of the labour market so that some categories of residents dominated certain jobs.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

The study raised two research questions regarding social networks. The research questions were as follows: Firstly, on what basis were social networks formed in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, and what purposes did such networks serve? The second research question related to the impact of the relocation process on people's social networks, and it was posed as follows: how did the relocation of Marconi Beam residents in Joe Slovo Park affect the nature and functioning of such social networks?

#### **7.2. Social Networks in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement**

The circumstances leading to the establishment of the Marconi Beam informal settlement were discussed. Shack fires were common and often residents' belongings were destroyed. As shown during residents often relied on assistance from other individuals who were based beyond the boundaries of the informal settlement itself. As Jadezweni's biography demonstrates, assistance came often from close kin in distant places. Secondly, not all of one's kin could be called to assist in needy times, but only certain categories of kin. Thus Jadezweni relied on his father every time his house was struck by fire or whenever he needed money to pump into his business. In other words, in times of need one knows exactly who to approach, and for what kinds of assistance.

Given the vulnerability of the informal settlement to shack fires, it was unwise for residents to contemplate amassing expensive material belongings such as furniture, cutlery, jewellery, and the likes. In cases where residents were able to acquire any belongings they send those to the rural areas for safe-keeping. Money was often kept in remitted to the rural homesteads or kept in bank accounts. Part of the money remitted to the rural homesteads was often used to acquire livestock and to assist in the cultivation of the rural household's farm land.

By remitting large sums of money to the rural household, the migrant in the urban areas was able to increase their influence in the economic affairs of the rural household. Despite physical absence a migrant who remits regularly to the rural household has considerable say in the affairs of a rural household compared to one who does not remit. I contend that the goods and money exchanged through kin networks between Marconi Beam Informal Settlement residents and their rural kin were substantial. This is illustrated by the exchanges that took place between Jadezweni and his father (see chapter four). These exchanges aimed at achieving life-long goals. Migrants in Marconi Beam and their rural kin cooperated in order to secure their economic security in future times.

Although it could be said that the residents of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement were relatively poor, there was nonetheless economic differentiation amongst them. Thus whereas there were residents who could afford remitting to their rural homesteads, others could not do so. Unlike their more fortunate counterparts destitute residents in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement found it difficult to enter into meaningful exchanges of goods and services with their rural households.



The destitute were often dependent on their kin, yet unable to reciprocate or to return the favours they had received. On the other hand in the city itself they lived from hand to mouth, often surviving through the assistance they received from others. The destitute seldom visited the rural areas, for even though they could afford travelling costs, they did not have enough to give to kin in their rural homesteads. Thus in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement there were two social categories of migrants namely, those whose economic situation allowed them to keep effective economic ties with the rural area of origin and those who could not.

A second type of social network that existed in Marconi Beam was between neighbours. When the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement started neither the authorities nor the residents could adequately control the entry of new residents into the settlement. Often, newly recruited residents were usually kin, village mates, work mates, or friends of pioneer residents. Thus objective conditions in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement encouraged the development and nurturing of kin and village mate networks.

The physical proximity of these dwellings to each other, on the one hand, coupled with economic scarcity on the other made it necessary that residents should exchange goods and services. The goods that were often exchanged included paraffin, candles, sugar, salt and small sums of money. The goods exchanged were small in quantity and often meant to meet the immediate needs. Furthermore often those who received assistance from neighbours were under pressure to return the favours as soon as it was possible.

### **7.3. Social Networks in Joe Slovo Park**

An assumption made in this study is that the relocation of Marconi Beam residents in Joe Slovo Park must have altered the social networks that had operated earlier. Unlike Marconi Beam, Joe Slovo Park is not an informal settlement but a formally planned working class suburb in which municipal services such as electricity, running water, street lighting and the like are provided. Furthermore the residents are no longer vulnerable to the home fires that were so much a part of life in Marconi Beam Informal Settlement. A question can be posed regarding how the change in the living conditions of residents has impacted on their social networks.

The household survey I conducted in Joe Slovo Park revealed that home owners continued to value their kin networks, and in fact lived with members of their extended kin for long periods of time. These rural kin came to Joe Slovo Park with the intention to find employment. Since the rural migrants were impoverished they depended on their kin for shelter and food. For as long as such rural migrants were unemployed they were not expected to pay rent or buy groceries.

This suggests that householders in Joe Slovo Park sustained their kin networks even after settling in Joe Slovo Park. Upon settling in their new homes residents used their houses not only for themselves and their immediate families, but to the benefit of extended kin as well. This suggests that even after acquiring formal housing migrants continue to perceive themselves as part and parcel of their rural homesteads and take practical steps to enhance the economic situation of their rural households. It is thus my contention that rather than creating a basis for terminating



social links with the rural areas, the provision of formal housing in Joe Slovo Park has strengthened migrants' economic position, and made it easier to continue linkages with their rural homesteads. Therefore just as in the case of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement, Joe Slovo Park residents continued to minimise their expenditures in town. By the same token they aspired to increase their remittances to their rural homesteads.

Asked why they chose to do so, they indicated that Cape Town was "no place to raise a family." Amongst the conservative element of the Joe Slovo Park population the view that children who grow up in the cities are rowdy is still entrenched. Males in particular prefer to have their children grow up in the rural areas and to come to Cape Town as adults who are ready to earn a living.

Yet there are parents (especially mothers) who acknowledged that although they considered the city of Cape Town as morally degenerate, the facilities for formal education existing in this metropolitan centre were by far superior compared to those existing especially in the rural Eastern Cape. Hence even conservative parents find themselves having to allow children to come to Cape Town in the interests of their careers. However there are some parents who even after having decided to keep their children in Cape Town for educational reasons, find it hard to afford the costs of such an education.

This is particularly so for female single parents who are unemployed. Due to unemployment some parents have decided, to send their children to schools in the rural areas. Often parents send children to the rural areas where they are cared for

by grandparents, not only paying their school fees but also providing for the subsistence needs of such children. This suggests that social networks of economic and cultural cooperation continue to bind urban and rural households together. And as a result people and resources continue to move in two directions, depending on the particular situations of households.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

This study investigated the importance of social networks amongst migrants in both Marconi Beam Informal Settlement and Joe Slovo Park. This study found that migrants considered themselves as sojourners in the city of Cape Town. Thus in Cape Town they were embedded in two types of networks namely kin networks and village mate networks. Furthermore they limited their consumption of goods, and tended to send monetary remittances to their homesteads in the rural areas of origin. Migrants in both Joe Slovo Park and Marconi Beam Informal Settlement hosted kin and village mates who had arrived either to look for work or attend to some other matters.

The remittances that were sent back home were not only used for the immediate consumption of rural household members, but also contributed towards long-term investment in the economy of the rural homesteads. The decision to remit to the rural areas, rather to accumulate property in the urban areas, was encouraged by objective circumstances. For example, the vulnerability of Marconi Beam Informal Settlement to shack fires encouraged residents to remit large sums of money and goods to the rural areas, where they could be kept in relative safety.



However, the move from Marconi Beam Informal Settlement and relocation in Joe Slovo Park did not lead migrants to abandon their rural homesteads. In addition to sending financial remittances, some residents keep their children in the rural areas because they regarded the urban areas as morally degenerate. In other words, urban migrants sustain both economic and cultural connections with the rural areas.

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